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Polemics and Networking in Graeco-Roman Antiquity

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POLEMIC, NETWORKING AND THEIR INTERPLAY
SOME PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

It is often said that public debate today is more divided than ever before. On the political stage alternative facts and caricatures of one's opponents have become the new—or not so new—weapons of mass seduction in a public arena that is increasingly polarised. The social media provide all the material needed for constructing a typology of the different forms of polemic, quarrel and mockery. And due to the current pandemic, the rivalry, competition and disputes among scientists of different schools, networks and disciplines, which form part and parcel of any scientific progress, have moved from our libraries and laboratories to television studios, to be broadcasted in primetime for the general public. It is a hermeneutic fact that our interest in the history of texts and ideas is inevitably shaped by the concerns of our times and by the prejudices that come with it. In this context it is hardly surprising to see that recent years have also witnessed an increasing awareness for the way in which controversy and polemic helped to shape intellectual life in Greek and Roman Antiquity. The number of papers, monographs and collective studies devoted to this topic in the past decade testifies to the increasing attention these phenomena have attracted.[1]

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[1] It may suffice here to quote only the titles of a few volumes of collected studies from various disciplines concerned with the ancient world that were published in the past decade and which have the term 'polemics' in their title: *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity. Politico-Cultural, Philosophical, and Religious Forms of Critical Conversation* (van Kooten & van Ruiten 2019); *Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Weisser & Thaler 2016); *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur / Polemics in the New Testament* (Wischmeyer &

And yet, competition, rivalry and polemics are of course not only in the eye of the beholder. They are closely intertwined with social realities and have served as driving forces in ancient cultures no less than in modern societies. These realities have left their traces all over the literary, philosophical and religious heritage of Greek and Roman Antiquity. Greek philosophy had been agonistic long before the formal constitution of philosophical 'schools' in the Hellenistic age. In the classical period, Athens famously served as an intellectual battlefield between Socrates and the sophists, in which a full armoury of eristic and elenctic strategies was developed. This confrontation was to become a paradigm for the opposition between rhetorical and philosophical models of education, from Plato and Isocrates to the Second Sophistic and beyond.

The Hellenistic age saw the rise of schools and other, often more informal types of network which committed its members to a core set of doctrines—not only in philosophy (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Scepticism), but also in medicine (dogmatists vs. empiricists), science (mathematical astronomy vs. more philosophical cosmologies), historiography (pragmatic vs. rhetorical and tragic approaches; pro-Roman vs. pro-Carthaginian accounts), grammar (allegorists vs. literalists), rhetoric (Asianism vs. Atticism), poetry (epos vs. shorter types of poetry), and theology (traditionalist vs. more 'liberal' approaches). An essential ingredient of this phenomenon is the development of stereotypic depictions of rival schools and fixed patterns of refutations. Many of these depictions and tropes survived the actual debates from which they emerged and the schools against which they were directed, as is apparent in the Platonic and Christian texts from late Antiquity.

The Hellenistic period also witnessed the emergence of new intellectual centres, such as Alexandria, and of text-based scholarly communities and networks. A select body of works and authors received authority as important vehicles of wisdom, and written commentaries gradually acquired a central place in philosophical, rhetorical and religious education. Both Christians and pagans adopted polemical strategies in distinguishing between 'orthodox'

Scornaienchi 2011a); *Polémique et rhétorique. De l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Albert & Nicolas 2010).

and 'heterodox' interpretations of their founding texts. This led to all sorts of controversies between authors who often had more in common than they were ready to admit. In this context, polemical strategies not only served to refute one's opponents, but also contributed to establishing intra-school identity and intellectual alliances. Ancient historiographers, for instance, were well aware that writing history could also serve the polemical agenda of discrediting one's predecessors while constructing one's own authority as an author. What at first glance may seem to be a methodological dispute often roots in political dissent. Similar patterns could be detected in medical authors, geographers or grammarians.

It is indeed possible to discern in the polemical literature of Antiquity not only a wide range of types and grades of polemic, as will be explained below, but also a whole spectrum of aims and intentions that go beyond these. The same goes for our own approach to polemical literature, which can enrich our understanding of ancient texts and cultures in a variety of ways. Intellectual alliances and oppositions can be studied for the role they played in making progress in science, philosophy, or even religion. Equally worthwhile is the aim to study the polemical types and tropes themselves and to take stock of the various strategies employed to attack opponents and of the literary, rhetorical or argumentative techniques used to depict them. Other interesting questions concern the methodology of dealing with polemical literature for the reconstruction of otherwise unknown doctrines or ideas. Polemical texts often turn out to be precious sources of information about authors or schools that are barely known in any detail from direct sources. When Xenophanes of Colophon, one of the first Greek polemicists, famously ridiculed Pythagoras for his views on the transmigration of the soul,[2] he could hardly have known that his pun would make history as one of the earliest testimonies for his opponents' doctrine. Aristotle's criticism of the academics not only provides valuable information about his own intellectual development, but also allows us to gain insight into the culture of open debate in the Early Academy and into the main positions that were defended. Were it not for the refutations and the caricatures sceptics made of its doctrines, our picture of

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[2] Diels & Kranz, I, 21 B 7.

ancient Stoicism would be even more fragmentary than it happens to be. These few examples from philosophical literature could easily be multiplied with illustrations from other areas of intellectual life. Literary controversies, religious disputes and schisms also allow us to value the authority of founding fathers, of source texts, and of those who helped to keep them alive for later generations, often in opposition to rival traditions. Polemical texts also shed light on the dynamics of ancient schools and learned networks, which makes them potential treasures of information for network analysis and the social history of Antiquity.

Polemic and networking are the two concepts that hold this volume together. However, they do not stand on the same level. The first is the more important one, the truly overarching topic; the other is dealt with in some of the essays as both a factor in and a consequence of polemic. In various ways contributors have focused on how polemic, rivalry and controversy have played a vital role in establishing 'intellectual networks' and 'group identities' in Antiquity: in philosophical schools, in textual traditions, in literary or artistic circles, in religious communities, and also in more personal 'networks'. We have chosen to study the topic from various perspectives and in various disciplines, from philosophy and philology to religious studies and the history of science, using a wide range of source material, including manuals, letters, orations, and systematic treatises of a particular subject. All essays were conceived to be read for themselves, but in bringing them together into one volume added value is created by offering a possibility to read them side by side to detect similar patterns and explore complementary perspectives. This introduction presents the theoretical framework that holds the papers together and draws attention to a couple of recurring themes. The following two sections briefly explain how the two main terms in the title, 'polemic' and 'networking', are here understood, how they are entangled with one another, and what insights we think this volume has to offer in this respect.

1. *Polemic, Rivalry and Criticism in Greco-Roman Antiquity*

1.1. 'Polemic': What's in a Name?

As is the case with several other terms of literary criticism used in modern scholarship to classify or characterise ancient works, the term 'polemic' poses some problems. As a word of common use its meaning may seem to be evident, so much so that many scholars do not feel it necessary to define their use of the term or to distinguish it from related notions, such as critique, satire, invective, or libel.[3] Yet, a closer look at some of the theoretical discussions, most of them stemming from German literature studies, and at its use in modern literature in general shows a broad range of definitions and usages.[4]

Ancient literary theory provides instructions for the ψόγος/ *uituperatio* as a genre and as an ingredient in other types of works. It is closely related to its opposite, the encomium. Key elements of the ψόγος and the encomium are based on the life of a person and include information about γένος, ἀναστροφή and πράξεις. In the former, these are used for attacks *aduersus personam*, not *aduersus*

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[3] Stauffer 2003, col. 1403 writes in the introductory paragraph of his lemma 'Polemik' in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*: 'Weder existiert "P(olemik)" als rhetorischer Fachbegriff, noch gibt es eine ausgebildete Lehre von ihr als Typus einer Redegattung. Obgleich eine Vielzahl von Forschungsbeiträgen den Begriff im Titel führen [...], scheint hier doch in der Mehrzahl weder eine klare Begrifflichkeit noch ein deutliches entwicklungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein zu herrschen'. An example of the absence of theoretical reflection in a work dedicated to polemics is Opelt 1980. The lack of in-depth studies on polemic and the lack of theoretical precision regarding its definition is repeated like a mantra in many works on the topic; see, e.g., Scheichl 2003, p. 119; Stauffer 2003, col. 1403; Dieckmann 2005, p. 27; von Möllendorff 2011, p. 57; Paintner 2011, p. 41; Southcombe, Suerbaum & Thompson 2015, p. 3, n. 11 (on Medieval studies). Lists of related terms, e.g., in Stenzel 1986, p. 4, n. 5; Lander 2006, p. 11.

[4] Useful contributions, on which the following is based, are: Koster 1980, p. 1–39; 2011; Stenzel 1986; von Matt 1994; Scheichl 2003; Stauffer 2003; Dieckmann 2005, esp. p. 7–76; van Gorp, Delabastita & Ghesquiere 2007, p. 362; Paintner 2011, p. 41–55; Southcombe, Suerbaum & Thompson 2015, p. 1–6; Becker 2017, p. 113–16; Männlein-Robert (in this volume), p. 385–421. Older theoretical literature can be found in Belke 1973, p. 122–24. Under the more general denomination of 'Streit' and 'Streitkultur' and in a diachronic perspective, the two collective volumes by Baumann, Becker & Steiner-Weber 2008 and Laureys & Simons 2010 contain valuable case studies; interesting case studies from early Christian literature and its environment in Wischmeyer & Scornaienchi 2011a.

rem.[5] Interestingly, according to modern standard treatments of polemic, it is only in the Christian literature of Antiquity that the metaphor of war, which lies at the basis of the modern concept of polemic, is used for referring to intellectual conflicts.[6]

This is not the place to sketch the history of the word 'polemic' as a literary term since its first occurrence (in French) in the sixteenth century.[7] Yet it is worth noting that initially the word did not have an utterly negative connotation. 'Polemic' was used in theological literature to denote the *theologia polemica*, a separate discipline, whose objective was to fight and refute the positions of other religions, other confessions, and sceptics. Polemic was 'the doctrine or art of scholarly refutation'.[8] Later it was also used for scholarly controversies on philosophy and literature. Although this more neutral use has never completely disappeared from scholarly literature, the word soon also took on a negative connotation. From the seventeenth century on, it was being used to describe an aggressive, personal verbal attack, often without real arguments,[9] and this meaning became predominant in common language in Western Europe in the course of the nineteenth century. This may explain to some extent the semantic range the word has acquired in modern literary studies. In what follows we present a few recent positions and theoretical approaches that are relevant for the topic of this volume.[10]

Within the field of Classical Studies, a classification of different forms of critical writing was proposed by Severin Koster in his 1980 monograph on *Die Invektive in der griechischen und römischen Literatur* and was reaffirmed in a more recent paper.[11]

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[5] See Koster 1980, p. 7–39 (in his terminology, this is classified as invective; see below).

[6] For Stauffer 2003, col. 1404 it is not attested before patristic literature (without references). Wischmeyer & Scornaienchi 2011b, p. 5 refer to Ep. Jac. 4.1–2. See, however, already Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1027d.

[7] For the following, see Dieckmann 2005, p. 7–22; cf. also the historical sketches in Kemper & Saner 1989; Scheichl 2003, p. 118–19; Stauffer 2003, col. 1403–1412.

[8] Dieckmann 2005, p. 13.

[9] See the definitions quoted by Dieckmann 2005, p. 20–21.

[10] More theories are described by Dieckmann 2005, p. 23–28.

[11] Koster 1980, esp. p. 1–6; 22–39; 2011, p. 39–42. The page numbers in the main text refer to his 2011 contribution.

Koster defines critique as 'an emotionless, factually-rational evaluation of a person or a fact' (39) which on occasion can be sharp. Polemic can have as its target a person *or* a fact and it is characterised by a form of verbal aggression. In the course of his discussion (39; 41), however, Koster specifies that polemic is primarily directed against a fact or an opinion, and not so much against a person, although personal attacks can be part of it. Its goal is to create distinction, not reconciliation (42). Koster reserves the term 'invective' for the extreme form of verbal aggression against a person that aims to disavow this person[12] and that is based on the ancient theory of ψόγος/*uituperatio*.[13] The 'intensity of the attacking speech' (39) is thus the main criterion to distinguish between the three modes of critical writing. Koster uses this terminology in his study of ancient texts that he defines as invectives, but he is aware that polemic and invective are commonly subsumed under the same term 'polemic'. This theory of polemic and invective has had some impact in Classical Studies and was, for example, used in the lemma 'Polemik' in the *Neue Pauly*.[14]

A different theory has been proposed by Jürgen Stenzel.[15] It has been the basis of most later studies in the field of modern literary theory, in which it was further developed and—to some extent—modified.[16] Stenzel defines 'polemic' as aggressive speech which is, primarily, not factual (in the sense of 'referring to facts/arguments', not of 'objective') but personal (in the sense of 'referring

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[12] See esp. Koster 2011, p. 39: 'Kritik zielt *a potiori* auf eine emontionsfrei wertende, sachlich-rationale Beurteilung einer Person oder Sache, Polemik auf aggressiveren Ausdruck von Meinungsverschiedenheiten über eine Sache oder Person und Invektive auf die vernichtende Herabsetzung einer Person. Alle drei Begriffe sind also grundsätzlich, aber in unterschiedlicher Intensität, der angreifenden Rede zuzuordnen'. And also 1980, p. 30: 'Hier (scil. in polemic) gilt die Auseinandersetzung in erster Linie der Sache. An zweiter Stelle kommt erst die mögliche Ausfälligkeit gegen den individuellen Vertreter dieser Sache'. His definition of invective as an independent literary form goes as follows: 'Die Invektive ist eine strukturierte literarische Form, deren Ziel es ist, mit allen geeigneten Mitteln eine namentlich genannte Person öffentlich vor dem Hintergrund der jeweils geltenden Werte und Normen als Persönlichkeit herabzusetzen' (1980, p. 39).

[13] See esp. Koster 1980, p. 2.

[14] Speyer 2001, col. 4.

[15] Stenzel 1986.

[16] Besides the scholars discussed below, Stenzel's theory is fundamental also for others; see, e.g., von Möllendorff 2011, p. 57–60; Becker 2017, p. 113–16.

to the person who is attacked').[17] When factual aggression predominates, he speaks of 'critique'. Although polemic can contain slanderous elements, it differs from slander because of its argumentative character. It does not necessarily contain elements of (real or pretended) enragement. Stenzel develops the concept of 'the polemical situation', consisting of 'the polemical subject' (the polemicist), 'the polemical object' (the target of the polemic), 'the polemical instance' (the public) and 'the polemical topic' (the debated issue).[18] The topic is by definition controversial, of some importance and able to 'arouse strong aggression' with the polemical instance. It is the goal of the polemical subject to destroy the authority and the person of the polemical object in the eyes of the polemical instance which should see him as their enemy and identify with the position of the polemical subject.[19] Stenzel lists a number of polemical *topoi*, all personal and taken from classical rhetorical theory, which the polemicist may use to reach his goal.[20] One of them is *innuendo* in the case of claims the factuality of which is doubtful or uncertain. Stenzel does not, however, address the question as to what extent lies are (a legitimate?) part of polemic.

Following Stenzel to a large extent, Sigurd Paul Scheichl nevertheless defers from him in some important points and formulations.[21] Scheichl admits that polemic is usually personalised or even 'constructs a personal opponent' (117). Yet he does not seem to limit polemic to attacks on persons, including as he does attacks on opinions (doctrinal, political, and others). Polemic is thus aggressive speech against a person and/or an opinion. Accordingly,

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[17] See Stenzel 1986, p. 4–5. Note also his specification: 'Erst unsachlicher Stil—nicht schon unsachliche Verfahrensweisen wie Zitatverfälschung und dergleichen—qualifiziert eine Rede als polemische. Als kleinste polemisch Einheit muß demnach der "polemische (Stil)Zug" gelten, etwa ein verletzenden Wort. Ein einziger polemischer Zug läßt bereits die weiter unten entwickelte "polemische Situation" in Kraft treten' (p. 4, n. 7).

[18] Stenzel 1986, p. 5–7.

[19] On this aspect, see also von Matt 1994; Southcombe, Suerbaum & Thompson 2015, p. 4–5 (and Foucault, quoted there).

[20] Stenzel 1986, p. 7–9.

[21] Scheichl 2003. Similar but, as it seems, independent from the German literature, Lander 2006, p. 11–12; Southcombe, Suerbaum & Thompson 2015, p. 4–6.

Scheichl distinguishes polemic from critique by the former's 'linguistic and stylistic radicalism' (118), which is supposedly absent from the latter. He clearly formulates an important point that was only implicitly assumed in Stenzel's analysis, viz. that polemic does not intend to persuade the opponent but only aims at discrediting him with the audience.[22] In addition, Scheichl identifies 'the exaggeration of antagonistic positions' and 'the claim of absolute truth for the polemical subject' (118) as prime characteristics of polemic.[23]

This combination of linguistic aggression of both a personal and a factual character is also stressed in other recent research.[24] Ursula Paintner even regards it as a decisive characteristic of polemic. Paintner approaches the issue from the perspective of communication science.[25] Building further on Stenzel's model of the polemical situation and on the theoretical reflections by Walther Dieckmann,[26] she stresses that polemical subject, object and instance are not to be identified with '"real" persons' but are 'inscribed roles'.[27] She reads polemic as 'a staged antagonism regarding a fact, the polemical topic' in which 'polemical subject and polemical object take up contrary positions and the polemical instance is to be convinced by the position of the polemical subject'.[28] One of its results is the construction of in-groups and

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[22] On this aspect, see also Dieckmann 2005, p. 40–43.

[23] On the claim of absolute truth as characteristic of polemic, see also Becker 2017, p. 114–15.

[24] See also Dieckmann 2005, p. 45–47, 63–76; Becker 2017, p. 113–14.

[25] Paintner 2011, p. 41–48.

[26] Dieckmann 2005, esp. p. 32–76. He describes his own position as, 'gewissermaßen eine expandierte Version des "heuristischen Schemas" zur Analyse polemischer Texte von Stenzel unter Einbeziehung weiterer Überlegungen in der Sekundärliteratur'.

[27] Paintner 2011, p. 44. She claims that this difference 'is not made explicit by Stenzel', but see Stenzel 1986, p. 5, n. 11: 'Gemeint ist damit (scil. with the polemical subject) zunächst der Autor. Ob und wieweit sich die *Rolle* des Polemikers, in die der Autor sich hineinschreibt, von seiner Realexistenz entfernt, müßte die Untersuchung des jeweiligen Einzelfalls ergeben'.

[28] Paintner 2011, p. 44: 'Bei Polemik geht es nicht vorranging oder ausschließlich um eine Vernichtung des Gegners, sondern es geht primär darum, in Bezug auf eine Sache, eben das polemische Thema, einen Konflikt zu inszenieren. Polemisches Subjekt und polemisches Objekt nehmen hierbei konträre Positionen ein, und die polemische Instanz soll von der Position des polemischen Subjekts überzeugt werden. Es handelt sich, knapp gefaßt, um einen inszenierten

out-groups, which almost naturally introduces the other key concept of this volume—networking—and shows in which way and how closely the two are connected.[29]

Scholarly literature also presents more general definitions of the term 'polemic'. The *Harper Handbook to Literature* mentions the following definition under the lemma 'polemic':[30]

> An argumentative or controversial writing, forcefully presenting the author's viewpoint, from a Greek word meaning 'war'. Milton's *Areopagitica* is a famous example.

And similarly in *A Handbook to Literature*:[31]

> A vigorously argumentative work, setting forth its author's attitude on a highly controversial subject. Milton's *Areopagitica* is the best-known English example. *The American Crisis*, by Thomas Paine, is a series of American *polemics*.

In these definitions the idea of *direct* aggression against an opponent or his views is absent. They bring us to the concept of 'indirect polemic' which can be found in more recent studies and which is also described by Männlein-Robert in this volume (and applied by others; see below).[32] Männlein-Robert regards texts as polemical even when they do not *explicitly* attack a person or a concept. Furthermore, 'affective colouring' (389) is not an indispensable characteristic of this form of polemic: texts 'grounded solely in facts and rational arguments' (389) can also be defined as polemical. This is the case when an author pleads for something in a rhetorically elaborate way at a time this is not yet or no longer accepted by society, as did Porphyry when defending oracles and cult statues from a philosophical point of view in a world that had become largely dominated by Christianity. Without making this explicit, Porphyry thus 'refutes "arguments" that are clearly of Christian provenance' (391). This is a very interesting approach

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Antagonismus in Bezug auf eine Sache vor Publikum'. Cf. Dieckmann 2005, p. 37–40.

[29] Paintner 2011, p. 47.

[30] Frye, Baker & Perkins 1985, p. 360.

[31] Harmon 2006, p. 404.

[32] Männlein-Robert, p. 385–421. Another example of this approach is Witulski 2011 who argues for the presence of implicit polemic in Rev. 10.1–5.

as it significantly enlarges the number of polemical writings. In the case of Porphyry, Männlein-Robert convincingly shows that a work such as *On Statues*, although it does not explicitly criticise Christian views, is part of his crusade against the Christians and was intended to prove Christian belief wrong. It can therefore safely be labelled as 'implicit polemic'. However, such a definition of polemic also creates other problems, especially that of separating polemic from other modes of speaking and, particularly in the case of ancient literature, of identifying polemic when the implicit target of the polemic is no longer extant.[33]

1.2. Polemic and Critique in this Volume

It has been remarked above that, from the earliest times on and throughout its history, ancient literature abounds with all forms of critique, ranging from friendly reprehension and correction to fierce polemic and excessive slander. This omnipresence of all forms of criticism is reflected in the contributions to this volume. The intensity of critique can range from purely factual to much more personal and vehement types of criticism. Proclus' *Hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum*, which belongs to the first type, reads as a plea for the superiority of 'philosophical' over 'empirical' astronomy. Significantly, Stenzel's 'polemical situation' does not apply here. Proclus does not reject empirical astronomy in its entirety and the addressee is one of his friends, not an enemy (see the essay by Lithari). Somewhat more intense is Alexander of Aphrodisias' critique of Stoic and Platonic positions in his commentaries on Aristotle. Nevertheless, Alexander does not assert that Aristotle is always right and to some extent even adopts Stoic and Platonic positions (see Militello). Neither can we speak of polemic, in the strong sense of the word, when commentators of Euripides and other classical poets blame them for having misunderstood a single passage in Homer. Such a critique is not meant to discredit these authors but rather to distinguish the commen-

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[33] It has frequently been noted that polemic is often extremely contextual, occasioned by and referring to the situation of the moment, which makes it most difficult to get a full understanding of what was going on; see, e.g., Van Gorp, Delabastita & Ghesquiere 2007, p. 362. In the case of implicit polemic, this becomes even more difficult as it often escapes us what was meant to be polemic.

tators themselves as expert interpreters (see Smith). However, in many other cases, discussions were conducted in a polemical way by authors claiming absolute truth for their position. They do not aim at reconciliation with their opponent, but rather want to discredit and at times even 'destroy' them as an authority. Such a claim of absolute truth is especially characteristic of polemical disputes among pagan philosophers, between pagans and Christians, and in inner-Christian controversies (see Baltussen, De Vos, Demerre, Donato, Fögen, Gemeinhardt, Männlein-Robert, Nijs, Tresnie). It is also found in polemical encounters among grammarians about the correct interpretation of Virgil (see Tischer). The form and the intensity of linguistic aggression with which the opposing view is refuted varies considerably and ranges from implicit polemic, which is even hard to detect, to fierce attacks against a particular position and/or a person.

The variety of texts presented in this volume further documents the omnipresence of polemic (and of less aggressive forms of critique) in ancient literature and even shows some unexpected and so far rarely explored cases of polemic. Polemic can be detected, not unsurprisingly, in political oratory (see Nijs), but also in treatises on art theory (see Falaschi), biography (see below), commentaries on poets and grammatical works (see Tischer and Smith), technical texts (see Fögen), novels (see De Vos), philosophical commentaries and treatises (see Lithari, Männlein-Robert, Militello and Nijs), philosophical dialogue (see Donato), and letters (see Gemeinhardt).

If one were to try and systematise the more important topics and insights on polemic that can be met when reading through the various contributions gathered in this volume, this could look as follows:

(1) Polemic is often personalised or creates a personal enemy/enmity. However, several papers also present cases in which a more general enemy is constructed and fought against: Greek medicine and culture in a Roman Republican context (see Fögen) or ignorant *grammatici* in late antique philological scholarship (see Tischer). The contributions also show a wide range of uses of biographical aspects of polemic. It is well-known that biography was used in philosophical schools and in Christianity to create

positive and negative paradigms for protreptic and educational purposes.[34] Eunapius' *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* can be read as anti-Christian polemic that 'offers a pagan alternative' to Christian heroes (see Baltussen; quote on p. 157); Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life* are part of the polemic between these two authors about the correct interpretation of Platonism (see Tresnie); Philostratus' negative 'Life' of Hermogenes is an element of his major project to replace traditional rhetoric by a new rhetorical concept (see Demerre); Athanasius constructs his own *persona* along the lines of the martyr typology in his polemic writings (see Gemeinhardt); and the author of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* personalises the pagan enemy by including in his story constructed representations of figures such as Simon Magus, Apion, Anoubion and Athenodorus as representatives of different aspects of Greek culture (see De Vos). In other cases professional competition between artists was translated into biographical episodes by later tradition (see Falaschi), and a conflict between competing grammarians could be biographised by inventing anecdotes that bring together Virgil and Cicero as exponents of different concepts (see Tischer).

(2) This volume shows in various ways how important implicit polemic was in Antiquity, especially in philosophical literature. Männlein-Robert finds it in Porphyry's *On Statues* (see above), Baltussen in Eunapius' *Lives* (and he defends Jerphagnon's reading of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* as implicit polemic against the Jesus of the Gospels). Tresnie sees in the *Life of Plotinus* anti-Iamblichan polemic and in Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life* an anti-Porphyrian stance. Demerre detects a hidden agenda in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, viz. the intention to polemicise against the traditional canon of orators. Nijs reads Philodemus' *On Flattery* as polemic against Cicero's allegations in *Against Piso* and the wide-spread accusations against Epicureans of being flatterers. Donato interprets the presence of Stoic and Epicurean concepts in some pseudo-Platonic dialogues as polemic against these schools meant to update Academic positions in Hellenistic times and to defend them against the new schools of philosophy. This approach of reading texts as (also) implicitly polemical can

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[34] See, e.g., Hägg 2012; Urbano 2013; Bonazzi & Schorn 2016; Schorn 2018.

surely be extended and it is to be expected that the study of other works will reveal more examples of this procedure.

(3) Using polemical strategies in countering an opponent was not an exclusively pagan phenomenon. In fighting pagan religion and culture, Christians made ample use of the same strategies in the way they were taught in the rhetorical schools (see Gemeinhardt and Fögen). A special case is the use of the novel as a literary genre to convey anti-pagan polemic (see De Vos).

(4) Several contributions show that the polemical aim is sometimes just one among many intentions an author had in mind. Intentions may overlap and add up to one another and their importance may vary. In addition to being polemical, Eunapius' *Lives* may also well have been intended to be historical, hagiographical, autobiographical and apologetic (see Baltussen, with a survey of various other intentions proposed by scholars). Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life* may have been isagogic and, at the same time, polemical (see Tresnie). The authors of philosophical or literary commentaries typically aim to explain a text, but their exegetical strategies can also form part of their polemic against other authors (see Militello, Smith and Tischer). What we may learn from these examples is that simple statements about *the* intention of a text most of the time reveal only part of the truth. One often has to reckon with an additional (perhaps partial or secondary) polemic tendency as well.

(5) Many authors have highlighted that polemicists (and also critics) do not always depict the theses and the personality of their antagonists correctly. In some cases they even consciously falsify the evidence in order to make it better serve their agenda: Porphyry and Iamblichus are less interested in the facts of the lives of their heroes than in creating exemplary figures (see Tresnie); in Eunapius' *Lives* inventions and exaggerations aim to outdo Christian hagiography (see Baltussen); Philostratus consciously twists certain aspects of Hermogenes' life and of the history of oratory to ridicule his adversary and to put on display his own concept of rhetoric (see Demerre); in the Pseudo-Clementines the pagan world as a whole is depicted as a place of deception and pagan antagonists are to a large extent literary constructs (see De Vos); Athanasius divides the world of Christianity in clearly defined parties around leading figures and even 'invents Arianism' as a well-

defined movement (see Gemeinhardt); Macrobius and Donatus present other grammarians as a bunch of narrow-minded dullards to make their own interpretation of Virgil more attractive (see Tischer); and Alexander of Aphrodisias has no qualms about distorting Stoic doctrine (see Militello). The essays gathered here offer a useful basis to establish, on the basis of a broader study, a scale and typology of distortions and inventions and to explore how far polemicists went, or were allowed to go, in the eyes of readers and fellow-polemicists, in fictionalising facts or events.

(6) Finally, one central function of polemic in Antiquity was the creation of in-groups and out-groups. This aspect will be briefly discussed in the next section.

2. *Polemic as a Networking Strategy*

As said above, this volume also pays attention to how the often distinctively polemical character of ancient intellectual debates is connected with networking. The existence and influence of such networks has long been neglected in the field of Classical Studies, although their relevance cannot be doubted. Many ancient *pepaideumenoi* maintained broad networks of friends and colleagues, and they did not hesitate to use them in order to reach their goals and strengthen their own social position. In his *Political Precepts*, Plutarch reminds the young Menemachus of the benefits of such networks. The statesman, he says,

> should also have always a friend among the men of high station who have the greatest power as a firm bulwark, so to speak, of his administration; for the Romans themselves are most eager to promote the political interests of their friends; and it is a fine thing also, when we gain advantage from the friendship of great men, to turn it to the welfare of our community.[35]

Plutarch practiced what he preached, for he entertained an extensive network of Greek and Roman friends and indeed bene-

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[35] Plutarch 814c; trans. Fowler 1936.

fited from their support.[36] The rich letter collections of Cicero, Symmachus or Libanius give us an idea of how these networks operated. All three, for instance, wrote many letters of recommendation in which they acted as power brokers, always willing to further the interests of their pupils or friends (on Libanius, see Marien).

In the last decade, research on ancient networks has gained momentum through so-called Social Network Analysis (SNA). On the basis of a mathematical approach, and with the help of computer models, the relations between individuals are visualised in complicated charts, in which numerous nodes (representing individuals) are linked with one another through a web of edges. Such charts do not merely map out the mutual relationships between individuals, but also throw light on related aspects, such as their mobility, the way in which information is passed on from one member of the network to the next, the evolutions within the network and their effects, the density of the network, the centrality of certain persons involved, and so on. SNA has yielded interesting results in different fields, including archaeology,[37] onomastics,[38] and historical studies of concrete networks.[39] Closer to the general theme of this volume are several studies in which SNA has been applied to unravel the dynamics behind famous theological controversies. In a seminal article, Clark has demonstrated that the controversy between Rufinus and Jerome on the teachings of Origen was not merely about theological arguments but was also largely influenced by the networks of both protagonists and the decisions of the go-betweens.[40] Similarly, Schor has argued that the 'Antiochene School' should be understood as an intellectual network with its own socio-cultural idioms.[41]

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[36] See Puech 1992 on Plutarch's network of friends. Plutarch acquired Roman citizenship through his friend Mestrius Florus.

[37] A good survey of recent studies in archaeology that are informed by SNA is Mills 2017.

[38] See, e.g., Broux 2015.

[39] Such as those of Alexander (Cline 2012) or Justinian's generals (Parnell 2015). See also the groundbreaking study of Ruffini 2008 on the social networks in Byzantine Egypt.

[40] Clark 1991.

[41] Schor 2007.

Several contributions in this volume likewise deal with debates and controversies in such intellectual networks, while resting on more traditional hermeneutics. To a certain extent, this methodological choice is motivated by the limitations of the available material. In many cases (though not in all), it is simply not possible to draw up elaborate data sets that can be presented and examined with statistical methods. Yet the choice for traditional hermeneutics is also a positive choice, reflecting the volume's general interest in the subtle intellectual dynamics of polemical discussions. These can often be laid bare more clearly through traditional hermeneutics than through the figures and charts of SNA. Consequently, there will be no 'nodes and edges' in this volume.

Several articles not surprisingly deal with controversies in various philosophical schools. These schools indeed constituted intellectual communities or networks of students, gathered round a (group of) charismatic teacher(s). Their origin was geographically anchored—all the important philosophical schools of Antiquity had their roots in Athens—, but they soon spread over the ancient world and thus created new networks. Epicurus, for instance, entertained a lively correspondence with other Epicurean communities (esp. on Lampsacus), and his example was still followed by Diogenes of Oenoanda in the second century AD. In the Platonic tradition, Athens remained important throughout the centuries, but other, local schools also saw the light, and Alexandria developed into a renowned centre of vital Platonic thinking.[42] Moreover, the networks of the schools transcended not only space but time as well. Many centuries separated Chrysippus from Marcus Aurelius, yet both are closely connected through their common Stoic convictions. Carneades, Plutarch and Proclus never met each other, yet they were all connected in the Platonic network through their common esteem for Plato. In this way, these networks easily cross the centuries. Epicurus, although long dead, is directly addressed by his opponents Epictetus (2.23.21), Plutarch (*That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* 1095e; *Live in Obscurity* 1128f) and Maximus of Tyre (4.9). Chrysippus is addressed by Galen (*The Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*

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[42] See, e.g., Watts 2006.

3.1.33; 3.4.17, etc.), Aristotle by the Neoplatonic commentators, and so on.[43]

The identity of such networks, then, was not primarily determined by interpersonal relationships but by shared intellectual traditions. These were crystalised in paradigmatic figures such as the founding fathers of the school (the divine Plato, the ἄνδρες in the Epicurean school,[44] or Chrysippus, the 'second founder' of the Stoa) and in the classic texts: the *corpus Platonicum* and *Aristotelicum*, Epicurus' *On Nature*, or the works of Chrysippus. These texts were frequently commented upon and thus gradually generated a new diachronic network of commentators constituting a community of readers who shared the same questions, pursued basically the same goals, adopted similar methodologies and exegetical principles, and often replied to one another.

The intellectual climate in the philosophical schools was impregnated with a polemical spirit. Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics and Epicureans all eagerly attacked each other. Moreover, these polemical attacks were also important for their own self-understanding and self-definition (see Militello). Again, networks often played a non-negligible role in this. Epicurean networks, for instance, did not merely contribute to community building through the mutual support of likeminded friends, but also fuelled polemical attacks against opponents. Epicurus himself sent some of his pupils to the court in order to rectify mistaken beliefs caused by the slander of his opponent Timocrates (Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1126c).

In exceptional cases, it is still possible to show how philosophical debates were directly enriched by concrete discussions between individual members of a single network. An interesting example can be found in Cicero's correspondence.[45] There we meet a com-

[43] Only a few passages, selected at random out of many more: Syrianus, *In Aristotelis Metaphysica* 99.35–36; Asclepius, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum libros* 30.13; 44.35–36; Olympiodorus, *In Aristotelis Categorias* 67.21; Philoponus, *De anima* 15.127.1–2; 15.464.13–14.

[44] On the important place of these ἄνδρες in the Epicurean Garden, see Longo Auricchio 1978.

[45] For a fine sample of SNA applied to Cicero's letter collection, see Alexander & Danowski 1990.

munity of intellectuals[46] who are not only discussing the latest developments in political life but also pondering over philosophical issues. The mutual exchange of different perspectives and arguments sometimes leaves tangible traces in Cicero's philosophical dialogues.[47] Such striking cases illustrate the significance individual networks could have for ancient philosophical polemics.

Such polemics, however, were not only between members of different schools. Even within one school, disagreements often entailed vigorous polemical debates. Philodemus attacks the Epicureans from Rhodes concerning the correct interpretation of Epicurus' work. Seneca does not hesitate to disagree with the founders of the school to which he belonged.[48] In the Platonic school, heated debates existed about the interpretation of the *Timaeus*.[49] Atticus opposed those Platonists who tried to interpret Plato by means of Aristotle, whereas Porphyry and Iamblichus were at variance with each other (see Tresnie).

The rise of Christianity led to the creation of a new network, clearly demarcated in terms of inside (εἴσω) versus outside (ἔξω), or in terms of truth versus lie and deception (see De Vos). Here as well, the network was defined by means of paradigmatic figures from the present (like inspiring bishops) and the past (Christ and the apostles) and further elaborated by a 'heavenly network' of saints and martyrs (see Gemeinhardt). Again, this generated new polemics, both with non-Christian communities (see Männlein-Robert) and between various Christian groups (see Gemeinhardt).

Such polemical debates were not the sour privilege of philosophers and theologians alone. Several articles in this volume indeed show that there existed many other intellectual networks that fostered polemics. The community of grammarians, for instance, involved in polemical discussions about the interpretation of Homer (see Smith) or Virgil and Cicero (see Tischer). Or the highly competitive world of ambitious sophists (see Demerre and Baltussen), or scientific scholarship (see Fögen), or

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[46] Cf. Steel 2005, p. 106–14.
[47] See Roskam 2019.
[48] Cf. Reydams-Schils 2011.
[49] See esp. the detailed overview in Baltes 1976/78.

the networks of artists that entailed both friendships and rivalry (see Falaschi).

All these contributions illustrate the complicated interplay between very different intellectual networks, which met each other and interacted in different ways. They throw light on strategies of appropriation and critical rejection (see Lithari), of polemics and self-confirmation. Polemical writings, of course, were authored by one particular person, but this individual stood in an age-old tradition and was a member of a rich network (often even more than one). Of course, he or she was not merely the product of this network but also an individual, not infrequently gifted with a sparkling intelligence. Yet one can only do full justice to the complexity of ancient controversies if we do not only focus on τὸν δεῖνα, brilliant though he (or she) may have been, but also on τοὺς περὶ τὸν δεῖνα, less visible though they usually were.

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The essays in this volume are a selection of the papers presented at the eighth annual conference of the KU Leuven Institute for the Study of the Transmission of Texts, Ideas and Images in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (LECTIO). The event took place at the Institute of Philosophy and the Holland College in Leuven, on December 12–14, 2018. The theme of the conference fitted the new research program LECTIO had launched shortly before, entitled 'Scholars, Scholastics and Scholiasts. The Dynamics of Learned Networks'. In addition to the editors of this volume, also Gert Partoens and Erika Gielen formed part of the conference's organising committee, and we thank them wholeheartedly for their contribution to this project.

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PART 1
PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS
AND TRADITIONS

MARCO DONATO

POLEMICS
IN THE *PSEUDOPLATONICA*

THE ACADEMY'S AGENDA AND THE
RENAISSANCE OF SOCRATIC DIALOGUE *

1. *Socratic Dialogues in the Academy*

The recent resurgence of interest in spurious or dubious items transmitted in the *corpus Platonicum* has led to the publication of a great variety of essays, editions and commentaries focusing on specific dialogues or on the *Pseudoplatonica* as a whole.[1] There is no scholarly consensus on the boundaries of this corpus, as doubts remain about the authenticity of individual texts.[2] Never-

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[1] Decades after the pioneering work of Müller 1975, the twenty-first century promisingly opened with the exemplary edition of the *Theages* by Joyal 2000 as well as with the seminal conference on *Pseudoplatonica* held in Bamberg in 2003, whose proceedings (Döring, Erler & Schorn 2005) still constitute a landmark reference for the study of *spuria*. Since then, new editions and studies have appeared, focusing on specific dialogues; one might mention the *Epinomis* (a team effort at the Italian CNR has produced two volumes devoted to this dialogue: a collection of studies by Alesse, Dalfino & Ferrari 2012 and a critical edition with commentary by Aronadio, Petrucci & Tulli 2013), the *Theages* (Bailly 2004; Döring 2004), the *Second Alcibiades* (Neuhausen 2010, with the promise of a commentary, still unfulfilled), the *Minos* (Dalfen 2009), the *Axiochus* (Männlein-Robert 2012), and the *Hipparchus* (Schubert 2018), not to mention the numerous articles discussing specific issues and a number of young and valuable scholars working on these problems. These two decades have also seen the appearance of two annotated translations of the whole *corpusculum* of pseudo-Platonic dialogues, respectively by Aronadio 2008, whose publication marked the rebirth of these studies in Italy, and by Brisson 2014. In recent years, the Platonic *dubia* and *spuria* have been investigated by François Renaud and Harold Tarrant (see, e.g., Renaud & Tarrant 2015 and Tarrant 2018), to whom I owe illuminating insights *per litteras* on various issues. For a full bibliography on the pseudo-platonic dialogues from 2000 to 2020, see Donato 2021.

[2] The debate on the *First Alcibiades*—notwithstanding the defence of its authenticity provided by Denyer 2001—still seems to be open (see Aronadio 2008, p. 33–41 for a *status quaestionis*, and Jirsa 2009), while fewer doubts remain

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theless, contemporary studies have often put aside the question of authenticity in order to investigate more thoroughly the form and content of these works. This approach has already obtained significant results.[3] In particular, broad agreement has been reached in recognising that the Academy in the decades after Plato's death was the context in which most—if not all—of this material was produced.[4] The association of these dialogues with the Academy, despite the persistence of sceptical voices,[5] has found a more solidly grounded historical basis today thanks to our improved knowledge of the functioning of ancient philosophical schools and in particular of the Academic foundations of the Platonic *corpus* as we have it.[6] This approach is bound to yield further results: a more profound inquiry on pseudo-Platonic literature would make it possible to shed light on the interests of the school in a period for which we have but scanty witnesses and could thus help us write a new chapter in the history of ancient philosophy. Moreover, it could also allow us to better appreciate an often neglected literary and historical fact, that is to say the persistence—or the

on the spuriousness of the *Clitophon*, despite the efforts of Slings 1999 to attribute it to Plato (cf. Rowe 2005); on the *Greater Hippias* the arguments employed by Petrucci 2016 in support of authenticity are probably definitive. Recent voices have nevertheless questioned other elements of the *corpus*, traditionally considered genuine: this is the case with the *Seventh Letter*, judged spurious by Burnyeat, Frede & Scott 2015 (but see Forcignanò 2020, p. 9–16), and even with the *Critias* (!), judged spurious by Auffret & Rashed 2017 (but see now the reaction in Tarrant 2019). To forewarn the reader and offer a clearer background for the reconstruction sketched in these pages, I will disclose my current position. I label as *Pseudoplatonica*: (a) the dialogues already known to be spurious in antiquity, as mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (3.62.683–88 Dorandi), and partially preserved in our manuscript tradition in the so-called *appendix*; (b) the dialogues that gave rise to doubts and suspicions in Antiquity which have been confirmed by modern scholarship, viz. the *Second Alcibiades*, *Hipparchus*, *Rivals* and *Epinomis*; (c) the 'trio' consisting of the *Theages*, *Clitophon* and *Minos*, which were never doubted in antiquity but have been contested in more recent times.

³ A sort of 'manifesto' for this approach can be found in Joyal 2000, p. 9–11.

⁴ For the general picture see, e.g., Müller 1975, p. 9–44, and Aronadio 2008, p. 23–32, but also most of the aforementioned studies on specific dialogues.

⁵ One can mention *in primis* the pessimism of Brisson 2014, p. 13–16; Brisson proposes to assign some of these dialogues to the rhetorical school of Isocrates: see Brisson 2014, p. 91 (*Clitophon*), p. 306 (*Rivals*), p. 344 (*Theages*); on the *Eryxias*, see Döring 2005 (Megarian circles?).

⁶ On the ancient tradition of Plato's text, see especially Carlini 1972, p. 3–30, and Aronadio 2008, p. 9–32.

rebirth—of dialogue, and more precisely of Socratic dialogue, as a plausible form for the transmission of knowledge in the Academic tradition.

As has often been remarked, the main common trait of the *spuria*—except for the *Epinomis*, which is independent from the other spurious writings, being an *appendix* to the *Laws*[7]—is that they all feature Socrates as the main speaker. This was far from an obvious choice given Plato's later production, in which his former master steps aside to leave the direction of each dialogue to other figures, such as Timaeus and the ξένοι from Elea and Athens. On the whole, pseudo-Platonic dialogues can thus be placed within the genre of Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι,[8] a genre whose apogee is situated in the first part of the fourth century BC.[9] So, why did the Academy continue writing dialogues featuring Socrates? This apparently curious phenomenon can be explained in the light of the wider historical context of the early Hellenistic age, when the figure of Socrates appears to have been subjected to a form of canonisation as a 'model-philosopher'.[10] It is not surprising, therefore, to see the Academy take part in this renaissance of Socratism, with the aim of claiming a pre-eminent role in upholding the philosophical heritage of Plato's master, especially from the scholarchate of Polemo (314/3–270/69 BC) onwards.[11] We can arguably place the production of new Socratic dialogues in this broader context: dialogues designed to integrate and renew the school *corpus* and to keep up with rival interpretations of Socratism.[12]

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[7] In the case of the *Epinomis*, one could also question its insertion in the category of 'spurious' dialogues, since the Academic tradition has transmitted the name of its author, Philip of Opus, an attribution which is nowadays accepted as plausible: see Aronadio in Aronadio, Petrucci & Tulli 2013, p. 173–78.

[8] This characteristic is correctly highlighted by Müller 1975, p. 19–21 (but also by the title of the book, evoking the genre of 'nachplatonischen Sokratik'); see also Aronadio 2008, p. 97–99.

[9] For an overview see Rossetti 2011.

[10] The classic study is Long 1988 [= 1996, p. 1–34]; on the influence on Stoicism, see Alesse 2000.

[11] On the role of the Academy in promoting this Socratic 'renaissance', see Männlein-Robert 2005, p. 123–27.

[12] A sign of this renewed awareness of the importance of the Socratic element in Plato's dialogue can be found in the *Second Letter* attributed to Plato, in which the author—probably an Academic of the late Hellenistic age—apparently assigns the whole Platonic *corpus* to a 'Socrates become young and fair'; see

2. *Polemics in the 'Pseudoplatonica'?*

According to the reconstruction just outlined, the production of new dialogues could also become a formidable tool for polemics. The Academy could use the authority of Socrates and Plato in order to settle a contemporary debate and to show the correct interpretation of Socratic paradoxes and principles, that is to say the interpretation that fitted the school's agenda at the time. It is not surprising that such instances of polemics have been effectively spotted by critics in the spurious dialogues of the Platonic *corpus*, but even so, a general reconstruction of the phenomenon is still lacking. Moreover, in the attempt to secure a place for pseudo-Platonic dialogues in the history of the Platonic tradition, recent studies have stressed the Socratic and Platonic origins of the main philosophical orientations we can find in them, as well as their strong connection with Plato's dialogues, which served as primary models for their redaction. This orientation has helped us to better understand the different forms of reception of Plato's dialogues inside the Academy, but scholars pursuing this task have sometimes downplayed the relevance of non-Platonic echoes and influences, including in cases where a polemic purpose is plausible. Indeed, a similar perspective represents a reaction to decades of studies focusing mainly on the question of authenticity, in which non-Platonic elements were sought out as signs of spuriousness, and sometimes of eclecticism and a lack of philosophical depth. This kind of enquiry had—and sometimes, albeit rarely, still has—the unpleasant side-effect of transforming the authors of these dialogues into sponges with no main doctrinal orientation and no definite philosophical personality. In turn, this led to a general underestimation of the philosophical content of these writings, especially in the shadow of Plato's authentic dialogues. For an overview, and a partial criticism, of this tendency, it is sufficient to consult the comprehensive *status quaestionis* sketched

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Renaud & Tarrant 2015, p. 202. We have no clue as to how these new dialogues were presented *within* the Academy, but it is plausible that their writing was conceived as a joint effort, connected with the achievement of the Academic 'edition' of Plato's writings: see *infra*.

out in the first half of the twentieth century by Joseph Souilhé in the Budé editions of dubious and spurious dialogues.[13]

So, if the reasons for a general *reductio ad Platonem* are understandable, we should be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, for the elusive and often ambiguous character of polemic references in pseudo-Platonic dialogues is connected with the specific literary form of these works and their pretensions of authority. In the rest of this article, I will examine three particular cases, with the aim of investigating the space devoted to contemporary polemics in Academic *socratica*, and the strategies Academic authors employed to incorporate these elements into Socratic dialogues.

3. *The 'Second Alcibiades'. 'tis folly not to know(?)*

In the *Second Alcibiades*, Socrates confronts the young Alcibiades' ambition to become the eminent political figure he is apparently destined to be. The situation is not at all new: this is a *topos* in a subgenre of the λόγοι Σωκρατικοί, the so-called *Alkibiades-Dialog*.[14] Eminent examples of it can be found in the production of Aeschines (*Alcibiades*),[15] Antisthenes (*Alcibiades*),[16] and probably Plato as well, if the *First Alcibiades* is to be considered genuine.[17] The seemingly original feature of the *Second Alcibiades* is the focus on the theme of prayer, and in general on the relationship between desire and knowledge: are we sure we desire what is best for us? Do we have any knowledge at all of what is best (the expression employed is ἐπιστήμη τοῦ βελτίστου: cf. 145c2, 145e8, 146e1)? If we are not sure about this, prayer becomes a dangerous act, as we might pray to have something which will eventually be harmful to us.[18] The conclusions of the dialogue, which aims to represent one of the possible starting points for Socrates' education of the young

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[13] Respectively Souilhé 1930a and 1930b.

[14] On the relationship between the *Second Alcibiades* and the tradition of the *Alkibiades-Dialog*, see Neuhausen 2005 and 2010, p. 128–46.

[15] See Pentassuglio 2017, p. 64–119.

[16] See Neuhausen 2010, p. 220–38.

[17] See note 2.

[18] On the conception of prayer in the *Second Alcibiades* and its roots in the Platonic tradition, see Timotin 2017, p. 59–79.

Alcibiades, are almost paradoxical: it is best for a man to abstain from prayers and sacrifices, until he has acquired knowledge of good and bad (151a–c).

The dialogue was generally regarded as authentic in antiquity, as is attested by its insertion in the tetralogical arrangement described by Thrasyllus,[19] and by quotations in later Platonists such as Proclus;[20] nevertheless, we know that ancient grammarians cast doubts on its authorship by, since a notice reported by Athenaeus testifies to an alternative attribution to Xenophon.[21] Modern scholars are unanimous in considering the work as spurious, and different hypotheses have been advanced on the dating: generally speaking, a late composition is suggested by its language,[22] and some scholars have supposed that the dialogue is the most recent of the *pseudoplatonica* included in the 'Thrasyllan' tetralogies.[23] As far as its philosophical content is concerned, interpreters have often noted that the aporetic conclusion could reflect a form of epistemological pessimism attributable to the scepticism of the Middle Academy,[24] but the most recent analyses, such as those by Francesco Aronadio[25] and Hubertus Neuhausen,[26] have stressed the Platonic and Socratic origins of this form of *aporia*, casting doubts on its connection with Arcesilaus' thought. This problem is secondary to our aim, which is to examine what has been regarded as an anti-Stoic argument in the dialogue.

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[19] Diogenes Laertius 3.59.650 Dorandi; the dialogue is the second item in the fourth tetralogy, a position reflected by our main medieval manuscripts. On the textual tradition of this section of the *corpus*, see Carlini 1964, p. 7–56.

[20] Cf. *In Platonis Rempublicam* I 187.4–188.27 Kroll.

[21] Athenaeus 11.506c1–5. Athenaeus' source in this case is probably Nicias of Nicaea: see Giannattasio Andria 1989, p. 156–57.

[22] See, e.g., Souilhé 1930a, p. 7 ('l'étude de la langue nous fixe déjà sur l'époque tardive de la composition'), and the list in Neuhausen 2010, p. 243. One can mention the occurrences of μηθέν (141c4, 150e6) and τυχόν (140a2, 150c5; also found at *Eryxias* 399b8 and *Halcyon* 4, 13), or the curious, certainly non-Classical use of εἰπεῖν with the meaning 'to ask' (144a1); see also Tarrant (forthcoming), ch. 2, § 3.

[23] See Müller 1975, p. 29–30.

[24] The thesis was first propounded by Bickel 1904, and then defended by Carlini 1962, p. 52–55.

[25] Aronadio 2008, p. 53–56.

[26] Neuhausen 2010, especially p. 240–42 ('der *Alkibiades II* ist vollkommen von skeptischen Elementen frei').

At the beginning of the conversation, Socrates proposes to Alcibiades the infamous example of Oedipus, who prayed that the gods might bring other evils in addition to those from which he already suffered (ἕτερα—scil. κακὰ—πρὸς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσι κατηρᾶτο, 138c3); Alcibiades' immediate reaction is to rebel against the implied comparison between him and the infamous Theban king (138c6–8):

> ΑΛ. ἀλλὰ σὺ μέν, ὦ Σώκρατες, μαινόμενον ἄνθρωπον εἴρηκας· ἐπεὶ τίς ἄν σοι δοκεῖ τολμῆσαι ὑγιαίνων τοιαῦτ᾽ εὔξασθαι;
>
> ALC. But the person you have mentioned was in a fit of madness, Socrates. Who in his right mind, do you think, would pray for that kind of thing? [27]

As is often the case in Socratic dialogues, the interlocutor's rebellion marks the beginning of a more profound philosophical inquiry: here, we find a long section on the definition of μανία and its relationship with knowledge. Through the example of physical health, a typical polar paradigm in Plato, in which the subject is forced to find himself in one of two opposite conditions—viz. a man is healthy or ill, *tertium non datur* (138d8–139a9; cf., e.g., *Gorgias* 495e2–5)—Socrates leads Alcibiades to the conclusion that, if μανία is the contrary of φρόνησις, then ἀφροσύνη and μανία are one and the same thing (139c1–5):

> ΣΩ. ἀφροσύνη ἄρα καὶ μανία κινδυνεύει ταὐτὸν εἶναι.
>
> ΑΛ. φαίνεται.
>
> ΣΩ. πάντας οὖν ἂν φάντες, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, τοὺς ἄφρονας μαίνεσθαι ὀρθῶς ἂν φαίημεν·
>
> SO. So folly and madness are probably the same thing?
>
> AL. Apparently.
>
> SO. So if we made the claim, Alcibiades, that the foolish were mad, our claim would be correct.

The passage has long been a focus of attention for what seems to be an outright quotation of the famous Stoic paradox 'all

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[27] The text of the *Second Alcibiades* is based on the edition by Carlini 1964, the translation is taken from Tarrant (forthcoming); I thank Harold Tarrant for letting me read his manuscript before publication.

unwise persons are mad'[28] (ὅτι πᾶς ἄφρων μαίνεται, cf. Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 4, and, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.124.974–76 Dorandi = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 3.665[29]); the subsequent refutation of this assumption in favour of a different, and more plausible, conception which contemplates the existence of different degrees of knowledge (140c5–d6) allows us to find polemic value in the passage.[30] Nevertheless, recent critics—most notably Aronadio in his Italian translation of the spurious dialogues—have doubted the actual presence of a reference to Stoic doctrine.[31] However, the similarity between what we find in the *Second Alcibiades* and the doxographical formulation recorded by Diogenes Laertius 7.124 is striking:

> πάντας τε τοὺς ἄφρονας μαίνεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ φρονίμους εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἴσην τῇ ἀφροσύνῃ μανίαν πάντα πράττειν

> [They say that] the unwise are all mad, inasmuch as they are not wise but act according to the folly which corresponds to their lack of wisdom.[32]

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[28] For the hypothesis of a Stoic influence on the passage, see, e.g., Stallbaum 1834, p. 323–24; Raeder 1905, p. 24, who does not comment on the author's stance towards Stoicism; Shorey 1933, p. 419–21, who speaks of 'one or two Platonic ideas […] pushed to the Stoic extreme' and of an 'anticipation of the Stoic thesis, that all the foolish are mad' (he partially corrects himself at p. 655, where he remarks that the implication 'is refuted with distinctions by Socrates in 140b–c'). Among recent interpreters, see Brisson 2014, p. 390, n. 12, who notes the presence of a Stoic theme and simply observes that 'le développement qui suit se distingue du stoïcisme'.

[29] In *SVF*, a misprint indicates that the passage is contained in the eighth book of the *Lives of the Philosophers*.

[30] See, e.g., Taylor 1929, p. 526–29; Souilhé 1930a, p. 10–11; Robin 1942, p. 1574, n. 4 ('puisque cette thèse est ensuite réfutée, on ne peut rattacher le dialogue à une inspiration stoïcienne'); Neuhausen 2010, p. 27–29.

[31] Aronadio 2008, p. 55–56; the treatment of the dialogue by Aronadio is far from exhaustive, and constitutes a peculiar exception in the context of an otherwise excellent book. The scholar's assumption that the *Second Alcibiades* was written in the Academy during Plato's lifetime seems forcibly sustained against the weight of linguistic data, and the same can be said for the analysis of its philosophical content. It is quite difficult to understand how Aronadio could write: 'tuttavia, la possibilità di distinguere la dissennatezza (ἀφροσύνη) dalla pazzia (μανία) di per sé non è elemento sufficiente a suggerire una contrapposizione alla dottrina stoica del πᾶς ἄφρων μαίνεται', when the very phrase πάντας τοὺς ἄφρονας μαίνεσθαι is uttered by Socrates in the dialogue.

[32] Translation from Hicks 1959, slightly modified.

One could also mention the formulation found in Stobaeus (2.7.5b13, p. 68, 18–23 Wachsmuth) and probably derived from Arius Didymus, in which the principle in question is justified on the basis of the fact that 'ignorance is the vice opposite to knowledge' (τὴν δ' ἄγνοιαν εἶναι ἐναντίαν κακίαν τῇ φρονήσει), which is the same argument as the one employed by Socrates in our dialogue (*Alc. 2* 139a13–b2).[33]

The significance of the polemic reference is therefore undeniable, yet it needs to be reconsidered in the frame of the dialogue: as has been noted, the argument ultimately aims to convince Alcibiades that the danger of becoming a second Oedipus is far from remote.[34] Only after having reached his goal, will Socrates evoke the possibility of a brand-new start for the conversation (140d7, οὐκοῦν ἀπ' ἐκείνου πάλιν ἐπανέλθωμεν). The polemic reference is therefore inserted in the dynamics of a protreptic ἔλεγχος designed to make Alcibiades aware of the limits of his position: the fact that he does not consider himself mad does not suffice to guarantee the possession of a form of knowledge, just as considering oneself not to be ill does not guarantee the possession of good health. The distance from Oedipus' μανία does not in itself put Alcibiades in a position to know how to address the gods and what to ask them; even his μεγαλοψυχία is a form—however mild—of ἀφροσύνη (150c8–9).[35] The Stoic paradox is thus put in a Socratic-Platonic context and rejected for its dangerous influence on youth, represented by Alcibiades.[36]

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[33] The origin of this argumentation is Socratic, as shown by its presence in Plato's *Protagoras*, where it is used to defend the unity of virtue (332a4–333b6): see Neuhausen 2010, p. 15–17 and 21–26.

[34] See the lucid remarks in Regali 2015, p. 166.

[35] The mention of μεγαλοψυχία as a form of ἀφροσύνη (cf. 140c6–d1) is another possible sign of the anti-Stoic background of Socrates' discourse: see Bickel 1904, p. 372–74; *contra*, see Tarrant (forthcoming), ch. 2 § 2. As Regali 2015, p. 170, shows, the introduction of the concept is influenced by the traditional characterisation of Alcibiades in Socratic literature.

[36] For a different interpretation, pointing to the Socratic origins of the Stoic paradox and of the inquiry on the distinction of folly and madness, see Tarrant (forthcoming), ch. 2, §§ 1–2.

4. *The 'Eryxias'. On the Correct Usage of Socrates*

A similar correction of a Stoic paradox has been identified in the *Eryxias*, by far the longest dialogue among the ones relegated to the so-called *appendix* of νοθευόμενοι by our manuscripts:[37] its fifteen Stephanus pages contain an articulate dispute between four characters (Socrates, Erasistratus, Eryxias and Critias) on a typically Hellenistic theme, the relationship between wealth and virtue (ἀρετῆς τε πέρι καὶ πλούτου, *Eryxias* 393a8–b1). Influences from Stoicism in this work have been evidenced since the two-tome Königsberg dissertation by Karl Heinrich Hagen, published in 1822.[38] In particular, Socrates affirms that the wisest man will also be the richest, as wisdom is the most valuable possession for a man (394a2–5):

> νῦν ἄρα ἡμῖν φαίνονται οἱ αὐτοὶ ἄνδρες σοφώτατοί τε καὶ ἄριστα πράττοντες καὶ εὐδαιμονέστατοι καὶ πλουσιώτατοι, εἴπερ ἄρα ἡ σοφία τὸ πλείστου ἄξιον κτῆμα φαίνεται.

> As it is, then, the same men are apparently the wisest, the most successful, the most prosperous, and the wealthiest, since it turns out that wisdom is the most valuable possession.[39]

As critics have argued, this could be seen as a direct reference to the paradox 'only the wise man is rich' (ὅτι μόνος ὁ σοφὸς πλούσιος, Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 6; cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Aduersus Mathematicos* 11.170 = *SVF* 3.598). Since David E. Eichholz's important article on the internal coherence of the *Eryxias*,[40] Socrates' position has rather been interpreted as a sign of anti-Stoic polemics: it would therefore be striking to find that, similarly to what we have noted in relation to the *Second Alcibiades*, the rigorist interpretation isolating the sage from the rest of humanity is evidently replaced with a gradual scheme, in which the wise man is not the only rich man, but the richest, as possessors of inferior goods will also be considered rich in some measure.[41] Anyway, as

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[37] The name *appendix Platonica* has been canonical for this section since Müller 1975.

[38] Hagen 1822, in particular II, p. 3–24.

[39] For the *Eryxias* I use the translation of Joyal 1997.

[40] Eichholz 1935; this paper is recognised by Döring 2005, p. 69, as the best general interpretation of the *Eryxias*.

[41] See Eichholz 1935, p. 131, and Gartmann 1949, p. 19–23.

recent critics have remarked,[42] a reference to the Stoic principle does not necessarily need to be identified here, since Socrates' words can also be understood as an extension of—I dare say a kind of *commentary* on—the prayer to Pan at the end of the *Phaedrus* (279b8–c3).[43] In general, recent accounts of the *Eryxias* have tended to exclude a direct influence from Stoicism, viewing the whole against the background of Plato's thought.

However, there is still one reason to mention the *Eryxias* in a discussion of *pseudoplatonica* as tools for philosophical polemic. Let us approach a key section of the dialogue, at the heart of the conversation between Socrates and his interlocutors on the problem whether wealth is good or bad (395d6–7, αὐτὸ τὸ πλούσιον εἶναι ὁποῖόν τί ἐστιν, πότερον ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν). Critias intervenes against Eryxias, who has argued that wealth is good (395e5), by showing that for some categories of men—notably the unjust and the intemperate—the possession of money is a source of harm, as it would be better for them to be poor (396e4–397b7); in a steady dialectical section, Critias' argument crushes Eryxias, who sits silent in his anger and shame. But at this moment Socrates intervenes, mentioning a disastrous exhibition of Prodicus in the Lyceum, which he witnessed two days before. Apparently, the sophist said the same things as Critias but completely failed to convince his audience (397c6–e2):

> ʼτουτονὶ μὲν τὸν λόγονʼ, ἔφην ἐγώ, ʼπρῴην ἐν Λυκείῳ ἀνὴρ σοφὸς λέγων Πρόδικος ὁ Κεῖος ἐδόκει τοῖς παροῦσι φλυαρεῖν οὕτως, ὥστε μηδένα δύνασθαι πεῖσαι τῶν παρόντων ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγει. καὶ δῆτα καὶ [τὸ] μειράκιόν τι σφόδρα νέον προσελθὸν καὶ στωμύλον, προσκαθιζόμενον, κατεγέλα τε καὶ ἐχλεύαζεν καὶ ἔσειεν αὐτόν, βουλόμενον λόγον λαμβάνειν ὧν ἔλεγεν· καὶ μέντοι καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον εὐδοκίμησε παρὰ τοῖς ἀκρωμένοις ἤπερ ὁ Πρόδικοςʼ. ʼἆρʼ οὖνʼ, ἔφη ὁ Ἐρασίστρατος, ʼἔχοις ἂν ἡμῖν ἀπαγγεῖλαι τὸν λόγονʼ; ʼπάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἐὰν ἄρα ἀναμνησθῶ. ὡδὶ γάρ πως, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, εἶχενʼ.

> 'Just a couple of days ago', I said, 'this very argument was being used in the Lyceum by a wise man named Prodicus, from Ceos. The people who were there thought he was talk-

[42] See Laurenti 1969, p. 16–22, and Aronadio 2008, p. 70.

[43] The relationship with the prayer of the *Phaedrus* has already been underlined by, among others, Shorey 1933, p. 433, and Gartmann 1949, p. 8.

ing such nonsense that he couldn't convince any of them that he was speaking the truth. As a matter of fact, a very outspoken young man came up and sat beside Prodicus. He began to laugh and jeer at him and provoke him; he wanted Prodicus to explain what he was saying. What's more, his standing among the audience was much higher than Prodicus'.

Erasistratus said, 'Would you like to give us a report of the conversation'?

'By all means, provided I can remember it. I think it went something like this […]'.

The introduction of the story is in itself likely to make the experienced reader of Socratic dialogues raise an eyebrow: the depiction of the young man is evidently designed to attract sympathy, and in his petulant insistence on exacting an account (λόγον λαμβάνειν) from Prodicus he displays a typically Socratic approach. The unfortunate result of the sophist's performance, which—as we will learn later—was cut short by the intervention of the head of the gymnasium, who chased Prodicus away from the place (399a2–5), casts an alarming shadow on Critias' victory against Eryxias. But what exactly did Prodicus say in the Lyceum? Let us continue reading Socrates' report (397e3–12):

> ἠρώτα γὰρ αὐτὸν τὸ μειράκιον πῶς οἴεται κακὸν εἶναι τὸ πλουτεῖν, καὶ ὅπως ἀγαθόν. ὁ δ᾽ ὑπολαβὼν ὥσπερ καὶ σὺ νυνδή, ἔφη ʽτοῖς μὲν καλοῖς κἀγαθοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθόν, καὶ τοῖς ἐπισταμένοις ὅπου δεῖ χρῆσθαι τοῖς χρήμασι, τούτοις μὲν ἀγαθόν, τοῖς δὲ μοχθηροῖς καὶ ἀνεπιστήμοσιν κακόν. ἔχει δ᾽᾽, ἔφη, ʽκαὶ τὰ ἄλλα πράγματα οὕτω πάντα· ὁποῖοι γὰρ ἄν τινες ὦσιν οἱ χρώμενοι, τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ πράγματα αὐτοῖς ἀνάγκη εἶναι'.

> The young man asked him in what respect he thought wealth was bad and in what respect good. Prodicus responded as you (i.e. Critias) did just now: 'It's good for gentlemen, the people who know in what situations they should use their property; but it's bad for those who are wicked and ignorant. The situation is the same with everything else as well: the nature of the things people deal in inevitably reflects the people themselves'.

While Socrates further underlines the fact that Critias' and Prodicus' arguments are identical, it is evident that the latter's argument proposes a wider perspective and constitutes the theoretical framework in which the examples proposed by the former

can be placed. Now, as most readers of the dialogue have clearly recognised,[44] the principle expounded by Prodicus is a development of a Socratic theme present in Plato's dialogues, that is to say the principle of 'correct usage' (ὀρθὴ χρῆσις). This doctrinal point, according to which the value of goods depends on one's capacity to use them correctly, was famously expounded by Plato in the *Euthydemus* and the *Meno*[45] to show the dependence of inferior goods on knowledge and virtue. This situation has led some interpreters, such as Michel Narcy,[46] to affirm that Prodicus is in fact expressing a Socratic position. But is the author of the *Eryxias* ready to accept Prodicus' and Critias' assumptions? The answer is negative: in the development of the dialogue, the principle of correct usage is deemed invalid for material wealth, as Socrates shows that material wealth is related to bodily needs (401e6–9), whose abundance represents a sign of illness, i.e. of a wicked condition (405c7–406a8). Apparently, for the author of the *Eryxias* there can be no correct usage of abundant material wealth, a position which seemingly corrects what is affirmed by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, where πλοῦτος is a common example of 'inferior' and external goods, whose value depends on their use. So, what could be the source of this urge to correct an established principle? Again, the dialectic battle against rival interpretations of Socratism seems to play a significant role in the author's agenda.

The category of 'neither good nor bad' (οὔτε ἀγαθὰ οὔτε κακά), often mentioned in Plato in relation to the principle of correct usage, was at the centre of the Academy's interests under Xenocrates. The scholarch developed a famous demonstration for the existence of the category (Xenocrates, F 149 IP²), which was later sharply criticised by Sextus Empiricus as a model example of circular reasoning (Sextus Empiricus, *Aduersus Mathematicos* 11.4–6).[47] But apparently, at the time when the *Eryxias* was written, that is to say probably when the Academy was led by Polemo,[48] this principle

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[44] See, e.g., Heidel 1896, p. 60, n. 3; Souilhé 1930b, p. 84–85; Laurenti 1969, p. 22–27.

[45] *Euthydemus* 280b6–281a1; *Meno* 88a3–d3; see Bénatouïl 2007, p. 7–16.

[46] Narcy 2011, p. 277–79.

[47] On Sextus' criticism see Spinelli 1995, p. 150.

[48] This assumption advanced by Aronadio (2008, p. 74) and Dillon (2015, p. 52), can be further supported by a detailed analysis of the philosophical content:

had become suspect: it is tempting to see in this change a reaction to contemporary readings, which forced the application of 'correct usage' to objects that the Academic tradition perceived as non-ambivalent evils. This is notably the kind of development which led to the Cynic and Stoic doctrine of indifferents (ἀδιάφορα).[49] It may be argued that the author of the *Eryxias* is reacting precisely against this interpretation of Socratism.[50] By making Socrates himself correct his position on wealth in a dialogue purportedly written by Plato on the subject—a work which was otherwise missing from the school's *corpus*—the Academy affirmed its authority in the interpretation of a central doctrinal point in Socratic ethics.

5. *The 'Axiochus'. Competing Arguments against the Fear of Death*

The choice of Prodicus as a mouthpiece for rival doctrines and interpretations is not unparalleled: the same pattern has been identified by readers in another text within the so-called *appendix*, the *Axiochus*. This short dialogue is usually dated to the last period of the Academy in Athens, between the second and first century BC:[51] it would thus represent one of the final items to enter the school's *corpus*, and offer proof of the enduring composition of Socratic dialogues until the very end of the Hellenistic age. The opening scene itself can be read as a meta-poetic representation of this persistence within the school: Socrates, while walking towards the Cynosarges, is called back in a great hurry by Clinias to comfort his father, Axiochus, who is lying terrified

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the tendency to consider virtue sufficient for happiness may be viewed within the context of Polemo's thought (see, e.g., *Stromata* 2.133.7, p. 186, 28–187, 2 Stählin = Polemo F 123 Gigante: χωρὶς μὲν ἀρετῆς μηδέποτε ἂν εὐδαιμονίαν ὑπάρχειν, δίχα δὲ καὶ τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ τῶν ἐκτὸς τὴν ἀρετὴν αὐτάρκη πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἶναι). It is widely accepted that Polemo's ethics constituted the radicalisation of tendencies which were already present in Platonic-Academic doctrine: on this see Dillon 2003, p. 166 ('the chief contribution of Polemo to ethical theory [...] would seem to be an increase in austerity of Academic doctrine which anticipates, to a significant extent, that of Zeno and his successors') and El Murr 2018, p. 351–52.

[49] On the Platonic origins of Stoic ἀδιάφορα, see Alesse 2007, p. 29–32, and Bénatouïl 2007, p. 219–43.

[50] Prodicus was already seen as a 'Stoic in disguise' by Eichholz 1935, p. 149.

[51] On the chronology of the *Axiochus* see Männlein-Robert 2012, p. 6–9, Menchelli 2015, p. 112–13, and Beghini 2020, p. 11–42.

on his deathbed (364a1–c6). Here, the desire for Socrates' λόγοι, already a *Leitmotif* of Plato's dialogues,[52] is reaffirmed with particular force. Clinias' invocation is heartfelt, as the iteration of the ὦ-less vocative clearly indicates (364a2, Σώκρατες, Σώκρατες).[53] But the effect is even stronger if we accept that the Cynosarges is mentioned in the dialogue because an ancient Athenian burial place was located there:[54] by means of a refined and typically Hellenistic literary device, Socrates would thus be literally called back from the grave.[55]

The dialogue is structured as a succession of arguments employed by Socrates in the attempt to soothe Axiochus' terror at the idea of dying. The first two attempts, both referring to the authority of the 'wise man' Prodicus (366c1, Προδίκου ἐστὶν τοῦ σοφοῦ ἀπηχήματα), turn into a total fiasco, as vehemently shown by the dying man's reaction (369d1–8):

> σὺ μὲν ἐκ τῆς ἐπιπολαζούσης τὰ νῦν λεσχηνείας τὰ σοφὰ ταῦτα προήρηκας· ἐκεῖθεν γάρ ἐστιν ἥδε ἡ φλυαρολογία πρὸς τὰ μειράκια διακεκοσμημένη· ἐμὲ δὲ ἡ στέρησις τῶν ἀγαθῶν τοῦ ζῆν λυπεῖ, κἂν πιθανωτέρους τούτων λόγους ἀρτικροτήσῃς, ὦ Σώκρατες. οὐκ ἐπαΐει γὰρ ὁ νοῦς ἀποπλανώμενος εἰς εὐεπείας λόγων, οὐδὲ ἅπτεται ταῦτα τῆς ὁμοχροίας, ἀλλ' εἰς μὲν πομπὴν καὶ ῥημάτων ἀγλαϊσμὸν ἀνύτει, τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας ἀποδεῖ.

> You've taken those clever ideas from the nonsense that everybody is talking nowadays, like all this tomfoolery dreamed up for youngsters. But it distresses me to be deprived of the goods of life, even if you marshal arguments more persuasive than those, Socrates. My mind doesn't understand them and is distracted by the fancy talk; they go in one ear and out the other; they make for a splendid parade of words, but they miss the mark.[56]

The last discourses, focusing on the immortality of the soul and on its mythical fate in the afterlife, will ultimately prove success-

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[52] See Regali 2012, p. 45–48.

[53] On the pathetic effect of these words, see Joyal 2005, p. 100, n. 14, and De Sanctis 2016, p. 55, n. 2; similar cases of iteration of the vocative are listed in Fehling 1969, p. 169–73.

[54] Beghini 2016, p. 10–18 and 2020, p. 196–98.

[55] On the Hellenistic features of the *Axiochus*, with the subtle, quasi-Callimachean use of *oppositio in imitando*, see Erler 2012, p. 111–15.

[56] For the *Axiochus*, translations are taken from Hershbell 1981.

ful, to the point of leading the elderly man to say that he has come to despise mortal life and to understand that death amounts to 'moving to a better home' (372a12–13, καὶ ἤδη περιφρονῶ τοῦ ζῆν, ἅτε εἰς ἀμείνω οἶκον μεταστησόμενος). But what is the content of the first two λόγοι, the ones that entirely 'miss the mark', viz. the ones attributed to Prodicus? Since at least Wilamowitz,[57] interpreters have underlined that neither argument can be traced back to the sophist's thought: while the first argument is a long pessimistic 'patchwork' of traditional motives in the literary genre of *consolatio*,[58] the second one is—most strikingly—an almost *verbatim* borrowing of the Epicurean 'refrain' on death that is familiar to us from the *Letter to Menoeceus* (125–26) and from the second of the *Ratae sententiae*.[59] The similarity is so pronounced that it calls for a synoptic table:[60]

Axiochus 369b7–c3:	Epicurus, *Ad Menoeceum* 125 (*ap.* Diogenes Laertius 10.125.1470–1472 Dorandi):
ὁ θάνατος οὔτε περὶ τοὺς ζῶντάς ἐστιν οὔτε περὶ τοὺς μετηλλαχότας [...] ὅτι περὶ μὲν τοὺς ζῶντας οὐκ ἔστιν, οἱ δὲ ἀποθανόντες οὐκ εἰσίν. ὥστε οὔτε περὶ σὲ νῦν ἐστίν—οὐ γὰρ τέθνηκας—οὔτε εἴ τι πάθοις, ἔσται περὶ σέ· σὺ γὰρ οὐκ ἔσῃ.	ὁ θάνατος οὐθὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ἐπειδήπερ ὅταν μὲν ἡμεῖς ὦμεν, ὁ θάνατος οὐ πάρεστιν, ὅταν δὲ ὁ θάνατος παρῇ, τόθ' ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐσμέν. οὔτε οὖν πρὸς τοὺς ζῶντάς ἐστιν οὔτε πρὸς τοὺς τετελευτηκότας, ἐπειδήπερ περὶ οὓς μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, οἳ δ' οὐκέτι εἰσίν.
Death concerns neither the living nor those who have passed away [...] As far as the living are concerned, death does not exist; and the dead do not exist. Therefore, death is of no concern to you now, for you are not dead, nor, if something should happen to you, will it concern you, for you will not exist.	So death is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not concern neither the living nor the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more.[61]

[57] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1895 (review of Immisch 1895).

[58] See Farioli 1998, p. 241–46 and the commentary of Beghini 2020, p. 257–59; on the Academy's role in establishing *consolatio* as a literary genre, see Tulli 2005.

[59] See especially Lohmar 2012, whose analysis stresses the insufficiency of Epicurean materialism for the author of the *Axiochus*.

[60] A similar comparative table can be found in Souilhé 1930b, p. 128.

[61] Translation taken from Bailey 1926.

In the *Axiochus*, the literary strategy we tried to spot in the *Eryxias* is therefore rendered explicit: Prodicus is employed specifically as the authoritative voice for inadequate arguments and positions, which correspond, not coincidentally, to the doctrines of a rival school. In this use of the character, the author of the *Axiochus* might have been inspired by the *Eryxias* itself, as verbal similarities suggest.[62] Whether this is the case or not, he felt justified in his operation of re-employing a traditional character of the Σωκρατικὸς λόγος in order to assess the school's polemic evaluation of a rival school, most notably in this case the Κῆπος. Let us now look at all the evidence and propose some conclusive remarks.

6. *Conclusions*

As I have tried to show by means of these three examples, we can identify the effective and significant presence of contemporary philosophical polemics in the Academic production of Socratic dialogues. The authors of these dialogues set themselves the difficult task of incorporating this element into the literary genre of the Σωκρατικὸς λόγος: this entailed that the mention of specific doctrinal points had to preserve a certain degree of subtlety, such as we see in the *Eryxias*, in order to be coherent with the fifth-century setting of these works. The elusive appearance of some of these elements, therefore, should not discourage contemporary readers; nor should this overall strategy be seen as surprising, for in pursuing it the Academic writers followed once more the example of Plato, whose dialogues offer a literary transfiguration of fourth-century debates, and even of the philosophical discussions carried out inside the school itself.[63]

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[62] Compare, e.g., *Eryxias* 397d7–e2 (ἆρ' οὖν, ἔφη ὁ Ἐρασίστρατος, ἔχοις ἂν ἡμῖν ἀπαγγεῖλαι τὸν λόγον; πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἐὰν ἄρα ἀναμνησθῶ. ὡδὶ γάρ πως, ὡς ἐγᾦμαι, εἶχεν […]) and *Axiochus* 366c9–d1 (ΑΞ. τίνα δὲ ἦν τὰ λεχθέντα;—ΣΩ. φράσαιμι ἄν σοι ταῦτα ἅ μνημονεύσω. ἔφη γὰρ […]); the fact that Prodicus' words are said to be a φλυαρολογία πρὸς τὰ μειράκια διακεκοσμημένη (*Axiochus* 369d2–3) can perhaps be traced back to the sophist's φλυαρεῖν in *Eryxias* 397c6–d1, since his discourse was addressed precisely to μειράκια in the Lyceum. The vague idea of a dependence of *Axiochus* on *Eryxias* for the depiction of Prodicus is already present in Eichholz 1935, p. 149. I bring further arguments for the comparison in Donato 2020, p. 67–71.

[63] The most striking cases are the first part of the *Parmenides*—in which the school's debate on the existence of ideas is transferred in a discussion between

Moreover, the choice of the dialogue genre also gave these writers a wide range of possibilities. In particular, the interplay of characters was of crucial importance. It suffices to return to our examples to realise that it is not by chance that rival doctrines or interpretations were assigned to specific figures of the tradition. Indeed, on the one hand we found the Sophist Prodicus, whose characterisation strikes the reader as an assemblage of different clichés connected with the sophists in Plato's dialogues, such as vanity (*Eryxias* 398c1–3), greed (*Axiochus* 367b5–c8) and the deliberate misquotation of poets (*Eryxias* 399e12);[64] on the other hand, we met characters such as Alcibiades and Critias, whose presentation is deeply rooted in a flourishing apologetic tradition that portrays them as two brilliant disciples of Socrates who eventually went astray. Surely the analysis could be pushed further, to encompass other dialogues in which traces of philosophical polemics have been correctly identified by scholars; but the overall picture is clear enough: the authors of these dialogues engaged in a sophisticated and—one may add—typically Hellenistic literary play with their model. In the Socratic production they found patterns and motives which could be re-employed, reworked and refashioned in order to express the school's position and research on particular doctrinal points. Up until the Academy's last days in Athens, before the arrival of Sulla, the attempt to provide an authoritative systematisation of the *corpus* connected with Plato's name—the so-called Academic 'edition'—was deeply intertwined with the need to update this heritage through the insertion of new dialogues. This afforded the Academicians the privilege to wage their battles with two powerful tools: the authority of Plato and the voice of Socrates.

Socrates and the two Eleatic philosophers Zeno and Parmenides (see Graeser 2010, p. 36–38)—and the *Philebus*, in which the debate on pleasure between Eudoxus and Speusippus is hinted at (see Dillon 2003, p. 67–77).

[64] For a more detailed analysis of Prodicus in these dialogues, see Donato 2020.

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Abstract

Recent studies broadly agree in recognising the Academy as the context where most of the spurious dialogues transmitted in the *corpus Platonicum* were produced. However, scholars have to cope with the heritage of decades of studies devoted to isolating non-Platonic elements in these works, most notably influences from other Hellenistic schools. Attempts to solve this problem have followed two approaches. The first is to minimise the significance of these purported influences, in an effort to fit everything into a Socratic-Platonic background; another approach consists in interpreting these allusions as signs of philosophical polemics, to be read as evidence of the Academy's engagement in the contemporary debate. In this paper, I intend to address the issue through the analysis of select passages from three dialogues (*Second Alcibiades*, *Eryxias* and *Axiochus*) in which scholars have identified traces of Stoic and Epicurean doctrines. I argue that most, if not all, of these references are effectively to be interpreted as a polemic against rival schools, and that their elusive appearance is conditioned by the literary genre of the Socratic dialogue.

WIM NIJS

GRAECULUS ET ADSENTATOR

PHILODEMUS' DEFENCE OF EPICUREAN FRIENDSHIP AND FRANK SPEECH IN ROMAN SOCIETY

1. *An Accusation of Flattery*

The highest aspiration of every Epicurean is to be able to live a tranquil life among likeminded friends, free from the worries and insecurities of a public life. Philodemus of Gadara seems to have had at his disposal all the ingredients for such a pleasant life of ἀταραξία while living in Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesonius' beautiful Villa on the Bay of Naples, where civilised lovers of philosophy and poetry came together to enjoy simple meals and pleasant conversations. Although Philodemus' patron, Piso, was a true Roman aristocrat who tried to combine his Epicurean sympaties with a political career, the vicissitudes of a public life in the Roman senate should not have been able to significantly affect the tranquillity within Philodemus' Epicurean circle. Yet Philodemus writes the following in his treatise *De adulatione* (*PHerc.* 222, 2.2–7 Gargiulo):[1]

> ὁ δὲ σοφὸς ὅμοιον μ[ὲν] | οὐδὲν προσοίσεται κόλα[κι,] | παρέξει δέ τισιν ὑπόνοιαν [ὡς] | ἐστι τοιοῦτος, ὅτι κη[λεῖ φρέ]|νας οὕτως ὅν τρόπον οὐδ᾽ α[ἱ μυ]|ικαὶ Σειρῆνες.

> The wise man does not behave like the flatterer, but he will provide suspicion for some that he is that sort of man, because he charms minds in such a way as not even the legendary Sirens do.[2]

Although no names are mentioned, the presence of such lines in *De adulatione* seems to suggest that Philodemus might have had some specific allegations of flattery in mind when he wrote them. In the next few lines Philodemus proceeds to contrast the sage and the flatterer (*PHerc.* 222, 2.10–16 Gargiulo; trans. Kemp 2010):

> Καὶ περὶ ἠθ[ῶν | ἐ]νκατασκευὴν προσκα[θαρ]|τικὸς ὁρᾶται
> καὶ [τ]ῶν [ἀγα]|θῶν ἐπα[ιν]ετικὸς σοφίας, δια]|πρέπ[ει δὲ] καὶ
> κ[ακίας] διακ[ρί]να[ς ἤ τὰς] παρ᾽[ἡμῖ]ν ἤ πάσα[ς.] | μάλιστα δὴ
> τῶν ἀ[νθρώπων | τοὺς] κόλακας ἐ[κ]διώκει, κα[ὶ | πολύ]ς ἐστι
> κατατρέχων τῆ[ς] | δι[αθέ]σεω[ς] α[ὐ]τῶν.

> And regarding the formation of attitudes, he is seen to be a purifier and an eulogist of the blessings of wisdom; and he distinguishes himself in the distinction of vices, both those in ourselves, as well as all of them in general.

> Of all people he most of all repels the flatterers and he is all about hounding their mental disposition.

Philodemus argues that, despite the apparent similarities between them, the κόλαξ and the σοφός are in fact fundamentally different, since aforesaid similarities only regard the form of their words, not their intentions and effects. Even if the flatterer sometimes praises his victim's actual virtues, he does not aim to encourage any moral improvement, and any positive effects of this praise are purely accidental. The words of the sage, on the other hand, add to morality rather than corrupting it and praise the benefits of wisdom, rather than announcing pleasant untruths.[3] Moreover, the sage does not only refrain from being a flatterer himself, but actively tries to repel the vice of flattery in others as well, as befits a true doctor of the soul.[4]

2. *In Search of the Accusers*

Of even greater interest, however, is the part that comes after this, which adds to the earlier impression of a possibly apologetic context (*PHerc.* 222, 2.16–21 Gargiulo; trans. Kemp 2010):

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[3] Cf. *PHerc.* 1675, 4.26–28; cf. also Plutarch, *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 59a [henceforth Plut., *Adul.*].

[4] Gargiulo 1981, p. 105; cf. Plut., *Adul.* 49b.

Καὶ τῶν [ὑ]|παρχόντων πόλλ᾽ ἀπολα[υ]στὰ διδόασιν αὐτῶι· κα[ὶ σ]υ[γ]γενεῖς ἐνίων καὶ συνήθε[ις] | π[ρ]οτιμώ[μ]ενον ὁρῶντες [ἀπο|διδ]όασιν αὐτὸν ὡς κόλα[κα.

And from what is available they give him many enjoyable things; and when the relatives and friends of some of them see that he is greatly being honoured, they define him as a flatterer.

2.1. Epicurus and the Sophists

Here Philodemus names the συγγενεῖς and the συνήθεις of the receivers of alleged flattery as the group of people who would be making such allegations of flattery against the Epicurean philosopher. This suggests that jealousy might be the motivation for the accusers' behaviour. These specifications give the impression that Philodemus has a fairly specific case of Epicureans being accused of flattery in mind. Unfortunately, the lines that follow are too badly damaged to enable us to determine the exact identity of these slanderers and their victim with absolute certainty. However, what we can glean from the damaged text of the last extant lines of col. 2 [5] suggests that at least one of the situations which

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[5] The other extant columns of the treatise are not part of the focus of this paper, as there is in my opinion insufficient ground to conclude that these also belong to the same apologetic project. In col. 4, for example, Philodemus discusses the relationship between δόξα and κολακεία, which may indeed have some kind of apologetic intention at heart. Erler 1992, p. 195–98 claims that this fragment diverges from Epicurean orthodoxy in order to incorporate the Roman ideal of *gloria* in an Epicurean framework. A similar view has also been brought forward by Gargiulo 1981, p. 105. Roskam 2007a, p. 111–12 on the other hand argues against this view and considers col. 4 either a specification of orthodoxy with regard to Κύριαι Δόξαι 7, or an objection to what flatterers might say in order to defend their actions. However that may be, even if we allow that col. 4 is apologetic in character or a (heterodox) *aggiornamento* of Epicureanism, the scope of such a project is certainly not to defend the sage from allegations of flattery, as seems to be the case in col. 2. Another interpretation could be that Philodemus is in fact defending himself against the accusation that he is, as Asconius (*Pis.* 68) calls him, *Epicureus illa aetate nobilissimus*, and as such a person who has indeed acquired a considerable amount of δόξα for himself. If this is indeed the case, then the claim that the sage also has a right to possess δόξα, as long as it is not acquired by means of vices such as flattery, may indeed have a rightful place in Philodemus' attempt to rid himself of the accusation of being a flatterer. Nevertheless, as Roskam 2007a points out, the precise meaning of this text cannot be understood without its missing context, which is why in this chapter I will only take into account the more explicitly apologetic col. 2.

Philodemus is thinking of could very well concern the sophists slandering Epicurus.[6]

This would be consistent with the testimony offered by Diogenes Laertius, who reports that Epicurus was often accused of flattering a number of people, prominent among them the Syrian politician Mithres, but also Idomeneus, Herodotus and Timocrates.[7] However, there are indications that Philodemus' defence does not only concern Epicurus. Diogenes Laertius reports that the allegations of flattery against Epicurus largely stem from representatives of rival philosophical schools, among whom the Stoics Diotimus and Posidonius and the Peripatetics Nicolaus and Sotion. Additionally he also mentions Dionysius of Halicarnassus and an anonymous author who apparently ascribed a number of epistles to Epicurus.[8] It is not unlikely that the sophists who are mentioned by Philodemus would also have had a place in the long list of mainly polemically motivated accusers. In fact, it remains yet to be seen if Philodemus' 'sophists' are even real sophists at all, and not just rival philosophers such as the ones on Diogenes Laertius' list. Just like Epicurus, and possibly Metrodorus as well, Philodemus tends to make polemical use of the term σοφιστής when indicating philosophers who are, at least in his opinion, guilty of using sophisms.[9] Therefore, the sophists mentioned in *De adulatione* could very well be identical to the slanderers on Diogenes Laertius' list. Be that as it may, it seems in any case rather unlikely that Philodemus would describe such accusers as the συγγενεῖς καὶ συνήθεις of those who were reputedly flattered by Epicurus. Therefore, I am led to believe that Philodemus was not primarily thinking about Epicurus' case when he wrote *PHerc.* 222, 2.

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[6] **τοῦτ]ο δὲ καὶ σοφισταὶ ποιο[ῦ]σι** . . . . .]γ τὰς ἐρημίας ε[. . | . . . . . . γ]νωρίμων ἀπολ[. . | . . . . .] διὰ δὴ καὶ τὸν ηκ[. . . | . . . .]οποτεγενομε[. . . . . |- - -]νον Ἐπικ[ουρ . . |- - -]υθ' ἡ βάσις[. . . .

[7] Diogenes Laertius 10.4–5.

[8] Diogenes Laertius 10.3–4.

[9] Angeli 1988, p. 82–102; Tepedino Guerra 1992, p. 122 and 1994, p. 15. See also Longo Auricchio & Tepedino Guerra 1981, p. 26–28.

2.2. Philodemus and Cicero

A second intended case may very well be Philodemus' own situation as Piso's *clien*s and the way in which he is portrayed in Cicero's highly abusive *Oratio in Pisonem*, in which considerable collateral damage is inflicted on Philodemus as part of Cicero's vehement attack on Piso's reputation.[10] As a political ally of Caesar, Piso made Cicero into a bitter enemy when he used his position as a consul to support Clodius when the latter proposed in 58 BC that Cicero be banished. One year later Cicero retaliates by accusing Piso of the misgovernment of the province of Macedonia. When a disgraced Piso returns to Rome and gives a speech in which he bitterly attacks Cicero on all levels, political and personal alike, the latter responds in kind. In 55 BC he delivers this *Oratio in Pisonem* before the senate. For Cicero, who tends to be a staunch opponent of Epicureanism, Piso's philosophical allegiance to this school offers an ideal opportunity to bring on all those typical points of criticism and longstanding stereotypes that have ever been dreamed up by opponents of Epicurus and his followers. Typical points of criticism such as their pursuit of pleasure at the expense of virtue, their alleged atheism, their selfish withdrawal from public life and their opportunistic view on friendship are all included in Cicero's comprehensive attack on Piso's personality.[11] In order to effectively criticise Piso's relationship with Epicureanism and his Epicurean friends, Cicero conveniently chooses to inflict collateral damage on at least one of those friends. He finds an easy target in a foreign *cliens* and Epicurean house philosopher like Philodemus, whom he describes in the following terms (*Pis.* 70):

> *Graecus facilis et ualde uenustus nimis pugnax contra imperatorem populi Romani esse noluit.* [...] *Poëma porro facit ita festiuum, ita concinnum, ita elegans, nihil ut fieri possit argutius; in quo reprehendat eum licet, si qui uolet, modo leuiter, non ut impurum, non ut improbum, non ut audacem, sed ut Graeculum, ut adsentatorem, ut poëtam.*

> The Greek was far too charming and complaisant to have any notion of standing up to a General of the Roman peo-

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ple. [...] He proceeded to compose a poem so witty, neat and elegant, that nothing could be cleverer. Anyone who wishes is at liberty to find fault with him for this poem; but let him do so gently, not as with a low and bare-faced rogue, but as with a poor little Greek, a parasite, a poet.[12]

As a conclusion to his mocking words about Philodemus he deals the Greek one last blow when he not only questions Philodemus' strength of character, but also his capacities as a philosopher and a teacher of philosophy (*Pis.* 71):

> *Si quidem philosophia, ut fertur, uirtutis continet et officii et bene uiuendi disciplinam; quam qui profitetur, grauissam susti-nere mihi personam uidetur; sed idem casus illum ignarum quid profiteretur, cum se philosophum esse diceret, istius impurissimae atque intemperantissimae pecudis caeno et sordibus inquinauit.*

> If, that is to say, philosophy is correctly described as compris-ing the whole theory of virtue and duty and the good life; and the man who professes that seems to me to have taken upon himself the most responsible of functions. He did but imper-fectly apprehend what he was professing in calling himself a philosopher, and chance too defiled him with the mud and filth of that bestial and unbridled monster.[13]

Although Cicero does not mention Philodemus by name,[14] and even admits that the latter possesses a few positive traits,[15] his crit-icism and mockery more than suffice to cast serious doubt upon several core pillars of the relationship between Philodemus and his patron.

What does Cicero's invective entail for Philodemus? He does admit that Philodemus is *humanus*, when he is not in the company of Piso or others like him. Therefore a straightforward reading of Cicero's words would seem to suggest that for Cicero Philodemus is not a full member of the other Rome-based group of Epicu-

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[12] Trans. Watts 1931.

[13] Trans. Watts 1931.

[14] From Asconius (*Pis.* 68) we learn that Philodemus is the *Graecus* Cicero speaks of: *Philodemum significat qui fuit Epicureus illa aetate nobilissimus, cuius et poemata sunt lasciua.*

[15] Cicero, *Pis.* 68: *homo, ut uere dicam—sic enim cognoui—humanus, sed tam diu, quam diu cum aliis est aut ipse secum.*

reans with whom Piso meets up, who are incessantly revelling in an unbridled pursuit of bodily pleasures. Another interpretation suggested by D. Sider is that Philodemus was indeed part of this rowdy group, where he also met the young Piso.[16] After moving to Naples he would have come in contact with Siro's more restrained Epicurean circle, consequently abandoning his former excessively hedonistic lifestyle in favour of the more sober one that is in line with his extant ethical writings.

Such an interpretation would indeed be consistent with Cicero's added condition *sed tam diu, quam diu cum aliis est aut ipse secum*. Furthermore, a Philodemus who acts like a philosophical chameleon whose interpretation of Epicurean doctrine shifts in order to fit in with the people around him would be completely in line with Cicero's assertion that the Greek *pugnax contra imperatorem populi Romani esse noluit*, as well as with the general course of the *Epicurei timidiores* mentioned in *De finibus* 1.69.

However, taking Cicero's rhetorical nuances as absolute truth always entails a certain risk. Cicero might indeed consider Philodemus to be more humane than the Epicureans in Rome. Yet, for all we know he could just be making this claim because it suits the picture he is painting of Piso as a corruptor of moral men, while in reality considering Philodemus as bad as his Epicurean peers in Rome.

In any case, the attribution of the positive trait of *humanitas* to Philodemus does not ultimately serve to mitigate the man's unseemly behaviour, but instead further aggravates the charges brought against him, while in light of his natural *humanitas*, he should have been perfectly able to avoid becoming a slavish flatterer of Piso.[17] Of course, we should always keep in mind that Cicero's main target is not Philodemus, but Piso. Even though Cicero ascribes a certain weakness of character to Philodemus, it is only through extended exposure to Piso's nefarious influence that the philosopher is brought down to the flatterer's deplorable state. Considering that Cicero's often quite contradictory accusations against Piso himself deserve to be taken *cum grano salis*, one should be equally careful when it comes to Philodemus' portrait.

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[16] Sider 1997, p. 17–18.
[17] Cf. Lucian, *Nigrinus* 23–24.

In any case, it seems that, when looking for reliable biographical data on Philodemus, the *In Pisonem* is probably not the best place to look at.

3. *Philodemus' Response*

One might expect that the Epicurean Philodemus would not allow his ἀταραξία to be compromised by slanderous allegations the likes of which had already been uttered against the founding fathers of Epicureanism.[18] Yet he would certainly bear in mind Epicurus' own advice εὐδοξίας ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον προνοήσεσθαι, ἐφ᾽ ὅσον μὴ καταφρονήσεσθαι ('to pay just so much regard to his reputation as not to be looked down upon').[19] In Philodemus' situation this would mean that the precept of λάθε βιώσας should indeed always be followed, but if despite all precautions the philosopher is being negatively noticed by the multitude, as must have been the case after being publicly slandered by Cicero, he may be forced to take action in order to repair his own reputation.

However, Philodemus' circumstances are considerably different to those in which Epicureans in Greek city-states like Athens had to defend themselves against attacks from rival schools. Although Cicero the philosopher can be compared to criticasters such as Timon, Chrysippus or Carneades, Cicero the statesman is a different matter altogether. The *In Pisonem* is primarily an oration of the statesman wishing to politically discredit his opponent, but the fact that in this particular speech he combines political invective with philosophical polemics creates a serious

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[18] Of course, we know of many cases in which Epicureans enthusiastically engaged in polemic altercations. Cf. Kleve 1978, p. 42; Kechagia 2011, p. 71–79 and Roskam 2017, p. 240–41, 269. Yet, I would like to draw a distinction between purely intellectual altercations, however heated these may seem at times, and situations in which an Epicurean's personality is maliciously slandered before the public at large. As Roskam 2011, p. 34 notes in his interpretation of Metrodorus' fr. 60 K, the Epicureans were well capable of being provocative in a polemical context *in their books*, rather than in public (ἐν πόλει), where acting like an obnoxious gnat (κώνωψ) could ultimately cause damage to themselves. It seems to me that the negative emotions ensuing from personal attacks, such as the one Philodemus experiences from Cicero, would be far more detrimental to one's ἀταραξία than simple philosophical polemics.

[19] Diogenes Laertius 10.120.

predicament for Philodemus, who is dragged into a public scene he manifestly does not want to be part of, due to his adherence to the precept of λάθε βιώσας.[20] Moreover, not being a Roman citizen it would have been far from easy to clear his name. Significantly, Philodemus is not even present when Cicero slanders him in front of the senate; actually, as a foreigner (*Graecus atque aduena*, as Cicero explicitly calls him)[21] he would not even have been allowed to be present if he had wanted to. Piso and Cicero can keep attacking each other with speeches in retaliation of past insults *ad libitum*, but when Philodemus is publicly labelled a parasite there is not all that much he can do about it.

What he can do, is what every Epicurean does when a problem arises: he considers what Epicurus would have done in such a situation.[22] And indeed, Philodemus may have found something of a precedent in Epicurus' course of action when faced with the dangerous attacks of the renegade Epicurean Timocrates. In any case, Philodemus himself writes that Epicurus did not respond to slanderous personal attacks in kind, preferring instead to provide rational arguments (λογισμῷ)[23] to overcome βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων,[24] thus moving the fight to a battlefield he was thoroughly familiar with and which would not entail the risk of mental disturbance.[25]

Philodemus seems to respond in a similar way, adopting a two-fold defence without explicitly addressing or attacking Cicero (at least as far as we know from the scanty textual evidence).

Yet this chain of action-reaction is less straightforward than the above implies, as some elements do not support the hypothesis that after receiving word of Cicero's invectives Philodemus immediately took his *stilus* in hand to refute the allegations. First of all,

[20] Ironically it was probably Piso's own attempt to reconcile his political practices with Epicureanism (cf. *Pis.* 65) that motivated Cicero's decision to attack his philosophy; cf. Fish 2011, p. 100, n. 109; see Griffin 2001, p. 91 for Piso's Epicurean motives for declining a triumph.

[21] Cicero, *Pis.* 70.

[22] The Epicurean habit of considering all life choices in light of what the Master would do is perfectly illustrated by Seneca's borrowed Epicurean aphorism *Sic fac, inquit, omnia, tamquam spectet Epicurus* (*Epistula* 3.25.5).

[23] Cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.117.

[24] Philodemus, *De Epicuro* [*PHerc.* 1289β], 24.2–9 and 26.1–12.

[25] Roskam 2007b, p. 47.

the *De adulatione* is not a stand-alone work written as an *ad hoc* answer to the *In Pisonem*, but a part of Philodemus' *magnum opus On Vices and Virtues*, which is in itself a companion piece to his other major work, *On Types of Life*. Moreover, *On Vices and Virtues* was not published shortly after Cicero delivered his speech in 55 BC, but at least five years later, which rather contradicts the scenario of Philodemus seating himself at his writing table in an outburst of righteous anger.[26] Thirdly, Philodemus' identification of the slanderers as συγγενεῖς καὶ συνήθεις of the alleged receiver of flattery is no more compatible with Cicero than it was with the likes of Diotimus and Posidonius in the case of Epicurus. Yet these συγγενεῖς and συνήθεις may have been what prompted Philodemus to react five years after Cicero's initial invective. It is entirely possible that Philodemus did not immediately react after Cicero's speech, reasoning that any attempt to counter the attack would expose him even more to the public than Cicero's words had already done. Although the wise man should pay enough regard to his reputation as not to be looked down upon, the result of the Epicurean inner *calculus* of benefit and detriment may have been that attracting Cicero's attention even more would be more detrimental than continuing to live safely and pleasantly in Piso's villa and waiting for the public to forget about him. However, Cicero's habit of publishing many of his speeches may have caused Philodemus' portrait to keep circulating, thus serving envious friends and family members of Roman aristocrats in his Epicurean circle as a welcome source to draw from for their own slanderous accusations against him. This would explain why Philodemus waited five years to publish some kind of defence, only reacting when the allegations threatened to affect his own tranquil life and convivial dealings with the young Roman aristocrats around him.[27]

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[26] Contrary to what one would be inclined to think, such a seemingly un-Epicurean sense of anger would indeed—at least to a certain extent—have been a possible emotion for Philodemus, since he allows that even the sage can sometimes be affected by a natural and tempered ὀργή involving true beliefs (*De ira* 37.16–38.34). Tsouna 2007, p. 44–51 describes this phenomenon in terms of 'bites'.

[27] Of course, it is entirely possible that, even without Cicero's *In Pisonem*, Philodemus would still have written a treatise on flattery as part of his therapeutic project. However, his use of the treatise as a platform to distinguish the flatterer from the sage could very well have been prompted by Cicero's invectives.

Of course, this possible course of events is only conjectural, since we have no evidence whatsoever that Cicero's allegations against Philodemus were afterwards recycled by others.[28] Nevertheless the importance attributed to the topic of flattery in *On Vices and Virtues* strongly suggests that accusations of flattery were a matter of great interest for Philodemus and the Epicureans of his circle, which could indicate that they posed a real problem to them. In any case, such allegations are far more damaging for later Epicureans such as Philodemus who live as foreigners in the Roman Republic. Being fully dependent on patrons like Piso, it is imperative that they counter any allegations of flattery and unilateral opportunism that could put the intrinsic value of their friendship in question. Furthermore, their humble social status forces them to reconcile their doctrinal way of life with the servile position of a *cliens* with regard to his Roman *patronus*. Where Epicurus is reported to have addressed influential men like Mithres in a way reminiscent of flattery in order to secure their sympathy and support for the Garden, Epicurean house philosophers like Philodemus have to spend every single day of their life in a position of dependency just to be able to keep living a tranquil life. Therefore Philodemus' books on flattery, being a manual for the Epicurean sage-to-be that instructs him on how to deal correctly with the reality of such a relationship between a client and his patron,[29] may have catered to the needs of many Greek refugees trying to adapt to the social context of their new life in Italy.[30]

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[28] For all we know, Cicero may not even be the original source of these allegations against Philodemus, in which case he may simply have gathered a number of rumours that were already circulating in Rome. However, a possible argument against this scenario could be that Asconius (*Pis.* 68) describes Philodemus as *Epicureus illa aetate nobilissimus*, which suggests that at the time of Cicero's speech against Piso, Philodemus' reputation was still untarnished.

[29] While the *cliens-patronus* relationship is typically Roman, the κόλαξ as a regular guest at the tables of rich and influential men was already a well-established social role in Greek society, albeit not one that was well-respected; cf. Longo Auricchio 1986, p. 82. Highlighting the subtle differences between the economically, but not intellectually and morally, dependent Epicurean *cliens* and the slavish κόλαξ of the dinner table must have been important for Greeks in Italy.

[30] Cf. Gigante 1985, p. 24.

4. *The Intended Reader of 'De adulatione'*

Who then is the intended reader of *De adulatione*? It is certainly not Cicero, considering that of the remaining fragments only *PHerc.* 222 seems to be explicitly apologetic, while the other fragments are more in line with Philodemus' diagnostic and therapeutic practices within the framework of his project of being a teacher of philosophy and a doctor of the soul. Of course, a copy of the treatise may eventually have reached Cicero via his Epicurean friend Atticus. In any case, it seems safe to say that Philodemus primarily intended that the treatise be read by other Epicureans, to whom, as Gigante points out, it could serve as a manual for the successful realisation of a *fuga dal servilismo* when trying to cope with the Roman system of social hierarchy.[31] Others that will probably be reached within the Epicurean networks are the Roman aristocrats consorting with Greek teachers of philosophy such as Philodemus. These would certainly benefit from a refutation of the accusation of flattery and an affirmation of the sincerity of Epicurean friendship, since they are the ones who might otherwise be influenced by the envious slander of non-Epicurean friends and relatives. The necessity of a successful *fuga dal servilismo* in *patronus-cliens* relationships must in any case have been widely felt among *clientes*, Greeks and Romans alike.[32] Horace, too, defiantly tries to establish his independence from his patron Maecenas, as well as the genuine nature of their mutual friendship, incorporating in his *Epistles* themes that are reminiscent of Philodemus' *De adulatione*. Such recurring themes include, but are not limited to the appropriation of the Aristotelian antithetical vices of flattery and enmity, of which friendship is the mean,[33]

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[31] Gigante 1985, p. 24.

[32] A satirical illustration of the hardships faced by Greek house philosophers can be found in Lucian's *De mercede conductis*. Lucian mocks themes such as the need to play the part of the servile κόλαξ in order to get properly paid (*Merc. cond.* 38), the danger of φθόνος turning into malicious accusations (*Merc. cond.* 39–40) and the house philosopher's vulnerability to such charges being brought against him by the *patronus' intimi*: ὁ μὲν γὰρ κατήγορος καὶ σιωπῶν ἀξιόπιστος, σὺ δὲ Ἕλλην καὶ ῥᾴδιος τὸν τρόπον καὶ πρὸς πᾶσαν ἀδικίαν εὔκολος. Τοιούτους γὰρ ἅπαντας ἡμᾶς εἶναι οἴονται, καὶ μάλα εἰκότως (*Merc. cond.* 40).

[33] Compare *PHerc.* 1082: φιλία [...] ἧς ἀντ[ι]παλός ἐστιν ἡ κολακεία to Horace, *Epistula* 1.18.9: *Ut matrona meretrici dispar erit atque discolor, infido scurrae distabit amicus. Est huic diuersum uitio uitium prope maius, asperitas agrestis et*

but also the important instrumental role that is being attributed to the *liber amicus*[34] in achieving moral rectitude, which strongly reminds one of Philodemus' treatment of Epicurean παρρησία.[35] Horace explicitly associates himself with Virgil, Varius and Plotius,[36] all members of Philodemus' circle of friends, and he may even have had a direct connection with Philodemus,[37] which supports the hypothesis that Horace may have used the latter's teachings as a basis for some of his writings. If this is indeed the case, it would indicate that *De adulatione* may indeed have successfully served other *clientes* in situations similar to that of Philodemus', such as Horace, as a manual for realising their own *fuga dal servilismo*.

5. *Flattery and Frank Speech*

To fully appreciate the importance that not being considered a servile κόλαξ must have had for *clientes* like Philodemus and Horace, the exact nature of the flatterer's role in ancient society should be taken into account.[38] Originally κόλακες, as the inevitable guests of any rich family's table, were seen as pitiful creatures who were completely dissociated from the topic of friendship.[39] In fact, the type of the κόλαξ seems to have corresponded to a popular stock character in the New Comedy[40] and was frequently used

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inconcinna grauisque, quae se commendat tonsa cute, dentibus atris, dum uolt libertas dici mera ueraque uirtus. Horace explicitly names enmity as the other extreme, which remains implicit in Philodemus; cf. Gargiulo 1981, p. 104; Kemp 2010, p. 67–68.

[34] Horace, *Satires* 1.4.132.

[35] Cf. Philodemus, *De libertate dicendi*, passim; *De adulatione*, PHerc. 1082 (2.1–14), where the element of frank speech is added to the antithetical pair flattery-friendship as an ἦθος belonging to friendship; cf. Gargiulo 1981, p. 104; Kemp 2010, p. 74–75.

[36] *Satires* 1.5.40–43; 1.10.81.

[37] See Sider 1997, p. 20–22 for a more elaborate account on Horace's possible association with Philodemus' inner circle.

[38] For a comprehensive study on the figure of the κόλαξ, see Ribbeck 1883.

[39] Theophrastus, for example, describes the relationship between the flatterer and his patron as a rather degrading form of ὁμιλία, rather than actual φιλία: τὴν δὲ κολακείαν ὑπολάβοι ἄν τις ὁμιλίαν αἰσχρὰν εἶναι, συμφέρουσαν δὲ τῷ κολακεύοντι (*Characters* 2).

[40] Konstan 1998, p. 292.

in the Athenian democracy as an insult reserved for those states-
men who appeared all too eager to please the Athenian δῆμος.[41]
The treatment of the issue of κολακεία in regard to the relation-
ship between friends only occurs when speaking of friendships
between persons of unequal status, like between monarchs and
their counsellors, or, in Philodemus' and Horace's case, between
a wealthy *patronus* and his *cliens*. It should, however, be noted
that not everyone deemed this type of relationship to be any sort
of friendship in the first place. Aristotle, for instance, consid-
ers such relationships inferior and does not even accept them as
actual friendships, unless the difference in status is balanced by
a mechanism of proportionality which entails that the inferior
partner bestows a measure of honour upon his superior, which
should be proportional to the benefit he derives from their asso-
ciation.[42] Evidently, accomplishing such an equalisation would
be very hard, if not impossible, when the difference in status is
all too great.[43] Considering the fact that the benefits Philodemus
received from Piso include the provision of his entire livelihood
as well as a beautiful Villa for him to live in, one might suspect
that, at least as far as Aristotle would have been concerned, equal-
ising such a staggering imbalance would be deemed quite impos-
sible. The fact that in antiquity the validity of unequal friendship
was disputed explains why it was absolutely imperative for people
like Philodemus and Horace to establish and defend their posi-
tion as a true and frankly speaking friend (*liber amicus*), rather
than a κόλαξ who is in fact not even a friend at all. If the κόλαξ is
antithetical to the true friend, and the ἦθος characteristic of true
friendship is παρρησία, then one might understandably expect it
to be relatively easy to distinguish the sage's frank speech from the
flatterer's insincere words, even if the sage's *dicta* about the good
life sometimes also sound attractive as if they were uttered by the
Σειρῆνες.[44] There are, however, two ways in which the words of
the flatterer and the sage could become easy to confuse. In the

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[41] Cf. Isocrates, *De pace* 8.4; Similar to this is Aristotle's equation of a tyrant's
flatterers and democracy's demagogues (*Politica* 1292a.21–24).

[42] Cf. Gill 1998, p. 318–19; *Ethica Nicomachea* 1158b.23–28; 1162b.2–4;
1163b.11–12.

[43] Cf. Konstan 1998, p. 290.

[44] *PHerc*. 222, 2 Gargiulo.

first place, the experienced flatterer might try to feign παρρησία in order to convince his victims of the sincerity of their friendship.[45] Even though such 'hollow' παρρησία[46] sounds somewhat harsher than the flatterer's usual tone, the experienced flatterer carefully sees to it that he does not criticise any serious shortcomings in his victim's character or deeds. Instead, trifling matters[47] or even imaginary faults[48] are targeted in such a way that this so-called frankness fuels the victim's emotional impulses and provokes actions that are in the flatterer's own interest.[49]

Secondly, the sage himself may sometimes see fit to sweeten his harsh words. Epicurean frank speech is far from uniform in its manifestations, as becomes apparent in Philodemus' own elaborate treatment of the matter in *De libertate dicendi*. Philodemus describes how different persons require the application of different types of παρρησία in different situations, which means that parrhesiastic speeches can vary in contents and severity. Moreover, he mentions that some types of people, among whom kings and persons of high standing in general, do not take it very well if they are addressed in a parrhesiastic fashion.[50] Although the extant text does not explicitly mention this, we might expect that for the use of παρρησία towards such people, and therefore probably also towards Piso, Philodemus would recommend a mild type of frank speech (μέτριον εἶδος), rather than the harsh (σκληρόν) or bitter (πικρόν) type.[51] Philodemus' choice for the mild type

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[45] Cf. Plut., *Adul.* 51c–d: 'But the most unprincipled trick of all that he [sc. the flatterer] has is this: perceiving that frankness of speech, by common report and belief, is the language of friendship especially (as an animal has its peculiar cry), and, on the other hand, that lack of frankness is ignoble, he does not allow even this to escape imitation, but, just as clever cooks employ bitter extracts and astringent flavourings to remove the cloying effect of sweet things, so flatterers apply a frankness which is not genuine or beneficial, but which, as it were, winks while it frowns, and does nothing but tickle' (trans. Babbitt 1927).

[46] Plut., *Adul.* 59c.

[47] Plut., *Adul.* 59e–f.

[48] Plut., *Adul.* 60d: 'But we come now to matters that are a serious problem, and do great damage to the foolish, when the flatterer's accusations are directed against emotions and weaknesses the contrary to those that a person really has'.

[49] Cf. Plut., *Adul.* 61e–62b.

[50] *De lib. dic.* 23a, 23b, 24a (= Konstan, Clay et al. 1998, p. 124–25).

[51] Tsouna 2007, p. 96–97.

of frank speech [52] when addressing Piso could certainly explain why it would be easy for outsiders to confuse his use of such a sugar-coated form of παρρησία with flattery. Once, albeit unjustly, branded as an *adsentator*, to use Cicero's terminology, being the inferior partner in his unequal friendship with Piso, Philodemus would easily fall into the category of insincere opportunists, well outside the scope of what the *communis opinio* would consider to be real friendship. It seems, then, that mocking words spoken by someone like Cicero could indeed pose a serious threat to a dependent house philosopher's search of tranquillity.

6. 'Cum optimos uiros, tum homines doctissimos'. Polemics with a Happy Ending?

Somewhat surprisingly, however, Cicero seems to speak far more kindly of Philodemus in 45 BC, when he briefly mentions him in his *De finibus* (2.119):

> *Quae cum dixissem, 'Habeo', inquit Torquatus, 'ad quos ista referam, et, quamquam aliquid ipse poteram, tamen inuenire malo paratiores'. 'Familiares nostros, credo, Sironem dicis et Philodemum, cum optimos uiros, tum homines doctissimos'.*

> Here I concluded. 'I am at no loss for authorities', said Torquatus, 'to whom to refer your arguments. I might be able to do some execution myself, but I prefer to find better equipped champions'. 'No doubt you allude to our excellent and learned friends Siro and Philodemus'.[53]

Based on Cicero's use of appreciative terms like *familiares nostros*, *optimos uiros* and *homines doctissimos*, it would seem that his relation with Philodemus has come a long way since the venomous mockeries of the *In Pisonem*. This remarkable change in Cicero's tone has led M. Gigante not only to speak of a positive change of heart in regard to Philodemus, but even to interpret the *In Pisonem* as a fundamentally ambiguous speech in which Cicero goes

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[52] For an example of elements that could feature in mild frank speech, see fr. 14.5–10 (= Konstan, Clay et al. 1998, p. 34–35): 'When he is not disappointed in some people, or very vehemently indicating his own annoyance, he will not, as he speaks, forget "dearest" and "sweetest" and similar things and…'.

[53] Trans. Rackham 1914.

out of his way to maximise the damage he can inflict upon Piso, while sparing his own *familiaris* Philodemus as much as he possibly can.[54] Moreover, according to Gigante, Cicero's attitude towards Philodemus is to be understood as a manifestation of his own internal conflict between his *Romanitas* and his love for the cultural richess of the Greek civilisation.[55] Of course, Philodemus' portrayal undeniably contains a certain amount of ambiguity, of which the example *par excellence* can be found in the contraposition of Philodemus' *humanitas* on one hand, and his role as an *adsentator* and poetical *laudator* of Piso's debaucheries on the other. Yet, it seems far from sure that Cicero's ambiguity in the *In Pisonem* is really in Philodemus' favour. As I pointed out earlier, attributing the positive trait of *humanitas* to Philodemus does not mitigate Philodemus' inappropriate behaviour, but instead aggravates the charges brought against him, as in light of his natural *humanitas* he should have been perfectly able to avoid becoming Piso's servile *adsentator*. Moreover, Cicero's use of dichotomies such as *humanitas* versus actual behaviour and *humanitas* versus intellectual capacity is not strictly reserved for his so-called *familiaris* Philodemus, but it is also used to characterise Epicurus and the Greeks in general. Epicurus is said to have been a *bonus uir*, *comis* and *humanus*,[56] but also *non satis acutus*[57] and *non satis poli-*

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[54] Gigante 1983, p. 50–51.

[55] Gigante 1983, p. 52: 'Esso [sc. il ritratto di Filodemo] è un'ulteriore testimonianza del dissidio che dominava l'oratore, il politico, lo studioso, l'innamorato e diffidente custode della romanità virtuosa e grave e il cultore appassionato della grande civiltà letteraria e filosofica dei Greci e creatore e sostenitore del concetto di *humanitas*'. Of course, these two elements are certainly present in Cicero, but in my opinion not in the form of such a strongly antithetical dichotomy as to create a serious internal conflict. If Cicero's philosophical writings are any indication at all, then we can clearly see that in terms of virtue Cicero places the thoroughly Roman *mos maiorum* first and puts more stock in the moral qualities of noble Romans than in Greek doctrine: cf. *fin.* 2.116–19; 2.80 (by implication). Cicero may indeed have admired the Greeks (or at least some of them) for their cultural wealth, and his Roman ancestors for their moral excellence. Yet, it seems to me that in Cicero this specific dichotomy is a static one, rather than a wavering balance between two irreconcilable allegiances, as Gigante seems to suggest. In any case, Cicero's displays of actual condescending demeanour towards Greek philosophy in some of his speeches, such as the *In Pisonem* and the *Pro Murena*, should probably be seen in the light of an orator's caution not to come across as a lofty Hellenophile; cf. Craig 1986, p. 233, 235.

[56] *fin.* 2.80.

[57] *fin.* 2.80.

tus.[58] Here a dichotomy of natural *humanitas* versus a deficiency in intellectual capacities and education is at work, thus cleverly presenting Epicurus as someone who meant well, but whose doctrines are fundamentally faulty because their designer was in no way qualified to philosophise correctly. Philodemus, on the other hand, comes off even worse than his Master. He is said to be *perpolitus*,[59] albeit not necessarily in philosophical matters. If we take Torquatus' account of the *timidiores* into account we can add to this that for Cicero, contrary to Epicurus, Philodemus qualifies as *satis acutus*.[60] Morally, he seems to share Epicurus' intrinsic *humanitas*, but with the significant difference that in Philodemus' case this inborn potential for virtuous conduct does not result in the corresponding life choices. Instead, the weakness of character of the *Graecus facilis et uenustus*[61] causes him to become a spineless *adsentator* and a *laudator* of all kinds of outrageously immoral behaviour. Moreover, at the end of his portrait of Philodemus, Cicero reveals that even the fact that Philodemus is *perpolitus* is not really a redeeming quality. This expertise is in no way relevant to being a philosopher, while, according to Cicero, Philodemus does not even know what that would entail.[62] While in Cicero's account Epicurus possesses moral worth, but lacks the intelligence to be a good philosopher, his follower Philodemus does not even succeed in using his moral potential, let alone know how to be a philosopher.

If Cicero seems at times to somewhat spare Philodemus, he probably only does so to make Piso look even worse, as may be the case in the following lines (*Pis.* 71):

> *Ex quibus* [*sc. uersibus*] *multa a multis lecta et audita recitarem, ni uererer ne hoc ipsum genus orationis, quo nunc utor, ab huius loci more abhorreret: et simul de ipso, qui scripsit, detrahi nihil uolo, qui si fuisset in discipulo comparando meliore fortuna, fortasse austerior et grauior esse potuisset.*

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[58] *fin.* 1.26.

[59] *Pis.* 70.

[60] *fin.* 1.69.

[61] *Pis.* 70; cf. *fin.* 1.69: *Epicurei timidiores paulo contra uestra conuicia*; cf. *Tusculanae disputationes* [*Tusc.*] 2.27.65, where Cicero claims that the Greeks generally lack strength of character: *Graeci autem homines non satis animosi.*

[62] *Pis.* 72.

> I would read you a copious selection of these (they have often been read and listened to before), were it not that I am afraid that, even as it is, my present subject is out of keeping with the traditions of this place; and at the same time I do not wish to cast any slur upon the character of their author.[63]

By allowing that Philodemus might have been able to live up to his potential, if he had not come across Piso, Cicero cleverly grants Philodemus a little redemption, only to be able to add the corruption of a *uir humanus* to the list of Piso's alleged crimes, thus furthering his primary goal of utterly destroying Piso's reputation. Similarly, Cicero's seemingly benevolent decision not to read Philodemus' reputedly scandalous poems in front of the senate may be due to the fact that these poems were perhaps not as scandalous as Cicero wants everyone to believe.[64]

If Cicero is indeed so unsparing of Philodemus in the *In Pisonem*, what brings about the change of tone that eventually makes him speak of Philodemus in terms of an *optimus uir* and *homo doctissimus*, rather than of a spineless little *adsentator*?

Such a radical change would indeed be hard to explain and should, in my opinion, not even be explained, since I doubt that for Cicero there ever was a positive re-evaluation of Philodemus. In the *In Pisonem* Cicero states that Philodemus should not be attacked as a criminal, but that he does deserve to be criticised

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[63] Trans. Watts 1931.

[64] Cf. DeLacy 1941, p. 56–57; Sider 1997, p. 17, however, suggests that some poems in which Philodemus rejects the excessive parties of the past in favour of a more sober life, might indeed reflect a more exuberant stage in Philodemus' life, provided that they are indeed autobiographical. Yet, the prominence of themes such as drinking, partying and womanising in these poems could simply be due to the genre of the Greek epigram. Furthermore, the preserved poems tell us next to nothing about Piso, with the notable exception of the far from scandalous *Anthologia Palatina* 11.44, where Piso is invited to a sober Epicurean banquet. Provided that Cicero did not have poems of which we have no knowledge, he may very well have considered it sufficient to suggest that the poems were about Piso's debaucheries, in order to make his audience reinterpret them in that light. I would like to add that the image of the Greek house philosopher reduced to a composer of erotic poetry for the sake of his masters' amusement may have been a known stereotype. Lucian certainly alludes to the willingness of some house philosophers to debase themselves in such a way, in order to curry favour with their masters: ἡδέως δ᾽ ἄν μοι δοκεῖς καὶ ποιητὴς γενέσθαι τῶν ἐρωτικῶν ἀσμάτων ἢ κἂν ἄλλου ποιήσαντος δύνασθαι ᾄδειν ἀξίως· ὁρᾷς γὰρ οἷ τὸ προτιμᾶσθαι καὶ εὐδοκιμεῖν ἐστιν (*Merc. cond.* 27).

leuiter, as a little Greek flatterer and poet. What I propose is that Cicero's attitude towards Philodemus in *De finibus* is a reflection of this *leuiter reprehendere* of which he speaks in the *In Pisonem*.

In his account in *De finibus* Cicero offers a *status quaestionis* of the Epicurean theory of friendship, thus enabling us to contrast the views of later Epicureans like Philodemus with those originally propagated by the school's Master. Cicero's Epicurean spokesman Torquatus offers three different conceptualisations of friendship, of which the first corresponds to the view of Epicurus himself, while the other two seem to be divergent interpretations by some of the school's later representatives. The orthodox rendition and the second of the two divergent interpretations are of lesser importance as far as this paper is concerned. The first divergent theory, however, does merit our attention, as this *positio timidior* has been identified as the view held by Philodemus (*fin.* 1.69): [65]

> *Sunt autem quidam Epicurei timidiores paulo contra ues-*
> *tra conuicia sed tamen satis acuti, qui uerentur ne, si amici-*
> *tiam propter nostrum uoluptatem expetendam putemus, tota*
> *amicitia quasi claudicare uideatur. Itaque primos congressus*
> *copulationesque et consuetudinem instituendarum uoluntates*
> *fieri propter uoluptatem, cum autem usus progrediens famili-*
> *aritatem effecerit, tum amorem efflorescere tantum ut, etiamsi*
> *nulla sit utilitas ex amicitia, tamen ipsi amici propter se ipsos*
> *amentur. Etenim si loca, si fanes, si urbes, si gymnasia, si cam-*
> *pum, si canes, si equos, si ludicra exercendi aut uenandi consue-*
> *tudine adamare solemus, quanto id in hominum consuetudine*
> *facilius fieri poterit et iustius?*

[65] Tsouna 2001, p. 159–72; 2007, p. 30–31. Of course, Cicero is not exactly an objective source on Epicureanism. Mitsis 2019, p. 113–15 is probably right to highlight this point once again. He expresses a doubt that this *positio timidior* should even be read as representative of any real group of Epicureans, rather than as an example of Cicero taking specific parts of Epicurean argumentation out of context in order to present them as something they were never supposed to be. Still, in light of Tsouna's arguments regarding the similarities between this position and some key features of Philodemus' conception of pedagogy, *Seelen-heilung* and frank criticism, we might say that, even if the *positio timidior* does not completely reflect Philodemus' actual views, it can still provide us with valuable information on the way in which Cicero chooses to view and represent Philodemus and those like him. When examining these polemical dynamics, we can safely make use of Torquatus' account on these *timidiores*, provided, of course, to keep in mind that we are looking at matters from a very specific, and above all very biased perspective.

> Other Epicureans though by no means lacking in insight are a little less courageous in defying the opprobrious criticisms of the Academy. They fear that if we hold friendship to be desirable only for the pleasure that it affords to ourselves, it will be thought that it is crippled altogether. They therefore say that the first advances and overtures, and the original inclination to form an attachment are prompted by the desire for pleasure, but that when the progress of intercourse has led to intimacy, the relationship blossoms into an affection strong enough to make us love our friends for their own sake, even though no practical advantage accrues from their friendship. Does not familiarity endear to us localities, temples, cities, gymnasia and playing grounds, horses and hounds, gladiatorial shows and fights with wild beasts? Then how much more natural and reasonable that this should be able to happen in our intercourse with our fellow-men![66]

If we read the account on the *positio timidior* as an example of *leuiter reprehendere*, it is possible to discern some irony in Cicero's words. Besides the fact that, as I argued before, the characterisation as *timidior* and, somewhat derisively, as *satis acutus*, are in line with Cicero's portrait of Philodemus as a spineless flatterer, several other elements in Torquatus' account could also have been written with some irony. *Congressus* might have a sexual connotation and *copulatio* could be a pun on the *copulatio* of atoms in Epicurean physics. In relation to a possible sexual interpretation of the relationship between Piso and Philodemus, one could also argue that the phrase *amorem efflorescere* seems somewhat strong as a description of a normal, non-physical friendship. In any case, the *a fortiori* argument which posits that for the Epicureans friends are similar to trivial things such as hunting dogs and gymnasia does seem to be rather depreciative of the value attributed to friendship by Philodemus.

Of course, interpreting these elements as ironical is highly conjectural. That being said, I do maintain that the polemical relationship between Philodemus and Cicero can be read in such a way, and that the validity of such a reading is, if not certain, at least plausible. Provided that the ambiguity of the *In Pisonem* does not entail a positive appreciation, the leap from contempt to genuine

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[66] Trans. Rackham 1914.

praise of Philodemus and, probably by association, also of Siro as *optimi* and *doctissimi*, would in my opinion be hard to explain. It would have been rather problematic for Philodemus, still Piso's protégé at that time, to have indeed become the *familiaris* of his patron's adversary after the events of 58–55 BC.

Of course, Cicero is known to have turned former enemies into allies and sometimes even friends, when necessity required him to do so. His reconciliation with and subsequent defence of both Vatinius[67] and Gabinius[68] illustrates his flexible mindset in such matters. Yet, his reconciliatory strategies are far from random. Instead, they are clearly motivated by considerations of political necessity or utility, and as such are manifestations of his *constantia* with regard to the ideological underpinnings of his political project.[69] It seems to me that a *rapprochement* between Cicero and Philodemus, a house philosopher with no political relevance whatsoever, cannot easily be explained by considerations of political utility.[70]

Another explanation could be that Philodemus' apparent rehabilitation is in fact little more than a formal courtesy. Cicero may just be showing the conventional politeness that is prescribed by the genre of the philosophical dialogue between gentlemen. If that is the case, Cicero's characterisation of the two Greeks as *optimos uiros* and *doctissimos homines* should certainly not be taken as an indication of his actual appreciation of Philodemus. Even so, I still doubt whether Cicero would have felt the need to extend such courtesy to Greek *clientes* as Philodemus and Siro. Cicero certainly does admire the Greek cultural heritage and he even tends to speak highly of some contemporary Greek philosophers, among whom the Epicurean Phaedrus.[71] Yet, we should not forget to take into account the role of social hierarchy in Roman society when studying Cicero' learned networks. The social status of relatively independent Greek intellectuals such as Phae-

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[67] Cf. *Epistulae ad familiares* [*fam.*] 1.9.19.

[68] Cf. *Pro Rabirio Postumo* 19.33.

[69] Fulkerson 2013, p. 254–61.

[70] That is, unless we are to interpret Cicero's rehabilitation of Philodemus as part of an attempt to make peace with Piso himself. There are, however, no indications that this is the case.

[71] *fam.* 13.1.2; *De natura deorum* [*nat. deor.*] 1.93.

drus, Zeno, Philo, Antiochus or Posidonius will probably have been quite different to the dependent position of house philosophers living off the generosity of wealthy Romans. And even so, Cicero tends to refer to certain groups of Greek Epicureans still living in Athens as *barones* when writing to some of his Roman friends.[72] It is not unlikely that this label should be traced back to Cicero's disdain for those Epicureans who hold a good education and a sophisticated way of writing in disregard. Yet, Cicero's scorn may not only be based on the fact that they are Epicureans, or even Greek Epicureans, but on the fact that, at least to him, these Greek *barones* are in fact uneducated rabble, not unlike the *indocta multitudo* attracted by the likes of Amafinius back in Italy.[73] We know precious little about the background of those living in the Epicurean Garden during the first century BC, but we do know that in Epicurus' own day the Garden welcomed all kinds of people, including slaves, women and prostitutes. Given that later Epicureans seem to have been a rather conservative lot who tried above all to follow the example of their school's founder, we may probably assume that the Garden of the first century BC was still populated with an odd mixture of members who had received a decent education and others who had not, but simply wished to take part in the tranquil communal life all the same. Of course, we cannot be sure if this was the case, but it is probably safe to assume that Cicero might indeed be inclined to describe such badly educated Epicureans as *barones*.

However that may be, even a *cliens* and house philosopher like Philodemus, although *perpolitus*, will probably not have been on a par with Roman Epicureans such as Atticus, Cassius or Torqua-

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[72] *Ad Atticum* 5.11; *fam.* 9.26.3; cf. Morgan & Taylor 2017, p. 534: 'A pattern may be established, then, according to which Cicero expects his Roman Epicurean addressees to be receptive to the playful ridicule and denigration of their Greek counterparts, especially in contexts where their level of culture and sophistication is in question'. If we accept that Cicero's appreciation of Philodemus and Siro in *fin.* 2.119 is ironic, this mocking praise may also be an example of the pattern described by Morgan & Taylor.

[73] *Tusc.* 4.6–7; In his letter to Memmius (*fam.* 13.1.5) Cicero draws a firm line between those living in Patro's Athenian Garden and his own Epicurean friend Atticus: [...] *non quo* [*sc. Atticus*] *sit ex istis; est enim omni liberali doctrina politissimus.*

tus.[74] I suspect that even in the case of Philodemus, who can hardly be called a *baro*, social hierarchy may have played enough of a role for Philodemus to be excluded from the genre's conventional courtesies. This seems to be supported by the different ways in which Cicero treats Philodemus and Cato in *De finibus*: Cato is made into an interlocutor and receives a passable apology for the relatively mild ridicule of the *Pro Murena*. Philodemus, on the other hand, who suffered far worse in the *In Pisonem* than Cato ever did in the *Pro Murena*, is mentioned just once in the entire *De finibus*, and then only as a last recourse for Torquatus, who is feeling cornered by Cicero's arguments. The fact that in this instance Philodemus is only given a shared compliment, which itself may even be ironical, does not exactly give the impression that Cicero is trying to apologise. Of course, as so often, we should be extremely cautious when trying to draw any conclusions on Cicero's real personal views, even though the amount of textual material and the seemingly inartificial nature of his letters makes it quite tempting to do so.[75] Therefore, we cannot be sure about Cicero's thoughts on Philodemus. The arguments listed above do not so much prove that Cicero is ironical when praising Philodemus and Siro, but rather that we should be wary of taking his words of praise at face value. Instead, we should bear in mind that Cicero may or may not be exhibiting the humorous condescendence of the well-educated gentleman conversing with his Roman peers.

[74] Until the summer of 59 BC, Cicero himself appears to have had a Stoic philosopher, Diodotus, living in his house (cf. *ad Atticum* 2.20; *fam.* 9.4; *nat. deor.* 1.6; *Tusc.* 5.113; *Brutus* 90.309). Cicero names him in *nat. deor.* 1.6 as one of the *doctissimi homines* to whom he owes his philosophical background. Yet, Cicero's main concern here is the legitimation of his own reasoning on theological matters, meaning that we should probably not exaggerate the importance of his praise of Diodotus. From the other passages one gets the impression that Diodotus was a valuable part of the household, rather than a real *familiaris* like Atticus or Varro. We should of course beware of *Hineininterpretierung*, but the paucity of words with which Cicero announces Diodotus' death to Atticus as if it were a mere *fait divers* may be illustrative of the real distance between the Roman *patronus* Cicero and his Greek house philosopher: *Diodotus mortuus est; reliquit nobis HS fortasse* † *centiens*† (*ad Atticum* 2.20). Even though Philodemus and Piso seem to have shared a measure of actual Epicurean comradery, Lucian's satirical portrait of the subservient life of a Greek house philosopher in a Roman household (*merc. cond.*) may offer a more representative image of the average house philosopher's conditions than Philodemus' case.

[75] Cf. Fulkerson 2013, p. 246.

Yet, a happy ending to these polemics may still have taken place, if not through an actual change in Cicero's appraisal of Philodemus. Even though Cicero may have continued to regard Philodemus in the same light as when he was slandering him before the senate, the fact that we know of no more notices on Philodemus' life after that seems to suggest that the Greek managed to slide back into anonymity, continuing to lead the good life in the beautiful Villa on the bay of Naples. It is impossible to ascertain whether Philodemus was still alive on 7 December 43 BC when his erstwhile nemesis Cicero died in perfect accordance with his sense of the *honestum*, but if he was, he will probably have spent that day as tranquilly and pleasantly as always, together with his Epicurean friends, in perfect accordance with his own sense of living the good life.[76]

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Abstract

Friendship and frank speech are fundamental constituents of the Epicurean way of life. This is not only the case in Epicurus' Athenian Garden, but also in the Epicurean circles of friends around his successors, such as Philodemus of Gadara (110–30/40 BC). Even in Epicurus' own time, Epicurean friendship was frequently subject to criticism. Moreover, Epicurus' critics call him a flatterer, because of his exaggerated praise of the school's benefactors. These same points of criticism are still used in anti-Epicurean invectives against later Epicureans, like Philodemus. However, the social and cultural context of Philodemus' life makes his position more precarious. Being fully dependent on his patron and Epicurean friend Piso, any allegation of flattery that could put the intrinsic value of this friendship in question is potentially harmful to Philodemus. When Cicero writes his speech against Piso, he not only attacks Piso and his Epicurean hedonism, but also describes Philodemus as an inconstant little Greek (*Graeculus*) and a flatterer (*adsentator*). This paper first of all aims to demonstrate that Philodemus tries to defend his reputation against such accusations by means of a refutation of the Epicurean sage's alleged flattery in his treatise *De adulatione* where he contrasts the flatterer and the sage. Secondly, this paper also aims to analyse the polemical relation between Cicero and Philodemus against the social, cultural and political background of the late Roman Republic.

CHIARA MILITELLO

REPLYING TO STOICS AS THE BASIS OF TRUE ARISTOTELIANISM

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLEMICS IN ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS' COMMENTARIES AND TREATISES

1. *Introduction*

Polemics against the Stoics permeate the works of Alexander of Aphrodisias, in which he provides his own version of Aristotelianism.[1] In fact, it may seem that Alexander's activity as a polemist is carried forward only in his treatises and that this activity is different from that as an exegete who wrote commentaries on Aristotle. Generally speaking, Alexander, while always being an Aristotelian, seems to have two different modes of championing Peripatetic philosophy: in his commentaries he devotes himself to the explanation of Aristotle's works, in the treatises he applies the principles of the philosophy of the Stagirite to the problems that were debated at the end of the second century BC, opposing the Aristotelian solution to the theories developed by the other schools, above all the Stoic. These problems often concerned difficult issues, for instance, whether a complete mixture of two different substances is possible, whether the actions of human beings are free or determined, and whether, in the universe, there exists a providence that cares for the individual. Since such problems were mostly alien to Aristotle, Alexander could be seen as applying some fundamental concepts and theories of the Stagirite to new subjects. In other words, when, in his treatises, Alexander criticises the Stoics, he is not simply explaining what Aristotle has

said in a given work. As a consequence, Alexander's polemics in the treatises may seem different from his exegesis in the commentaries, even though both activities are based on the philosophy of Aristotle.[2] However, recently several scholars have noted that each section of Alexander's treatises is related to one or more passages in Aristotle's works. It has been convincingly argued that, even when he is polemising against the Stoics in his treatises, Alexander always starts with an Aristotelian passage, which he explains and develops.[3]

I intend to show that, as in his treatises, Alexander interprets Aristotle at the same time as he criticises the Stoics, so in his commentaries he criticises the Stoics at the same time as he is interpreting Aristotle.

Before moving to the arguments in support of this thesis, some points should be clarified. First of all, the thesis I have just stated is not totally original, as other scholars have already stressed the presence of anti-Stoic elements in Alexander's commentaries.[4] However, my intent is to provide a general picture of the role that Alexander's criticism of Stoicism plays in his exegesis, highlighting the features the commentaries and treatises share and explaining the link between polemic and interpretation.

Of course, I do not want to state that there are no differences at all between commentaries and treatises. It is evident that the works in which Alexander systematically comments on each *lemma* of a given work by Aristotle differ from those in which he tackles a single philosophical problem (or a set of interrelated problems).[5] I only wish to demonstrate that anti-Stoic polemics

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[2] On the differences between treatises and commentaries, see Fazzo 2005, p. 292–93.

[3] Todd 1976, p. 25; Accattino & Donini 1996, p. xxx; Rashed 2007, p. 3, 36–37, 52; Fazzo 2017, p. 137–41. Another point of contact between treatises and commentaries is that one can find the same arguments in the commentaries and in the treatises. See, e.g., Militello 2017b.

[4] Todd 1976, p. 15. On the other hand, Fazzo argues that the anti-Stoic polemics is central in the treatises, but almost inexistent in the commentaries (Fazzo 2005, p. 293).

[5] Alexander's *On the Soul*, which was probably close to his commentary on the homonymous work by Aristotle, but nonetheless had some peculiar features, is a very interesting case study from this point of view. See Accattino & Donini 1996, p. vii–xi.

play a major role, not only in Alexander's treatises but also in his commentaries, albeit in a different way. I will return to this problem later.

Also, even though it should go without saying, it may be worth to specify that I am not stating that the anti-Stoic polemics were more important than the interpretation of Aristotle, or even as significant as it. I just want to point out that these polemics play an important role in the commentaries. There is no reason to dispute that Alexander always starts from the Aristotelian texts and that his main problem is how to interpret them.

Moreover, I am not denying that there are Stoic influences in Alexander's thought. On the contrary, these influences are crucial. Indeed, some of the most important features of Alexander's exegesis of Aristotle owe much to Stoicism. However, I think that, in order to fully assess the significance of the Stoic influences on Alexander, one should first understand the role of the anti-Stoic polemics in his thought, which is the goal of this paper.

It is also necessary to specify that my statement about the importance of anti-Stoic polemics within the exegesis of Aristotle's works does not exclusively apply to Alexander. On the contrary, Alexander is part of a long-standing tradition. As a matter of fact, since the third century BC, Peripatetic philosophers focused on the topics treated by the Stoics, in order to show that the Stoic theories were wrong. To mention just two examples, Lyco includes pleasure in his definition of the most perfect life,[6] mainly in order to counter Stoic extreme rationalism,[7] and Critolaus' main goal was to use Aristotle's doctrines to confute the Stoics.[8] Generally, Peripatetics concentrated on issues such as the category of the relative, the eternity of the world, fate and providence, the difference between the heavens and the sublunary world, the relationship between senses and true knowledge, the relationship between virtue and happiness, the right attitude towards emotions, and

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[6] Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* 2.21.129.9.

[7] On Lyco's position as a form of polemics against the Stoics, see Lefebvre 2016, p. 25.

[8] On the opposition to Stoics as the main goal of Critolaus, see Sharples 2010, p. ix, 148, 167, 179, 208–09. Sharples mentions Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* 2.7.32.3–33.1.2; 2.21.129.10; Epiphanius, *Adu. haereses* 3.508.4–15; Plutarch, *Praecepta gerenda reipublicae* 811c.11–811d.7; Stobaeus 2.7.3b.6–13.

the justifiability of suicide, because one of their main aims was to reply to the claims made by the Stoics about these subjects.[9] I concentrate on Alexander simply because he is the only ancient Aristotelian whose works have survived to a substantial extent.

Finally, in some passages of his commentaries, Alexander does not only oppose the Stoics but also the Platonists. I will focus on the Stoics because they are arguably the main target of Alexander's polemics.

2. *Polemical References in Alexander's Commentaries*

Alexander's commentaries contain several polemical references to the Stoics. In some passages, he uses the thesis presented in the Aristotelian *lemma* on which he is commenting to criticise Stoic doctrine. For example, in the commentary on the *Topics*, Alexander applies Aristotle's *topos* about genus not participating in the species to Stoic doctrine, in which the Something (τι) is the highest genus. Indeed, in this case, Alexander both criticises the Stoics and considers their possible reply to his criticism, when he says that a Stoic would not accept the statement that Being is predicated of all things.[10] A debate between Peripatetics and Stoics is directly represented in a commentary. Staging (or maybe even re-enacting) a debate with a Stoic opponent is a particularly significant act from our point of view, as it shows that Alexander did not apply Aristotle's teachings to the confutation of Stoic doctrine by chance. That the Something not being the highest genus is an important example for Alexander is confirmed by the fact that he is interested in the way his opponents could reply to his argument. Alexander uses the Aristotelian *topos* to show that the Stoics are wrong, while also wondering what reply he can expect and conceiving a counter-reply. Moreover, when Alexander criticises the same theory by appealing to a different *topos*, he considers the reply as given to him by his (imaginary or real) Stoic opponent, as

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[9] The role of anti-Stoic polemics in the history of Aristotelianism is well explained in Sharples 2010. For an even larger assessment of the relationship between exegesis and polemic, see Baltussen 2007.

[10] Alex. Aphr., *in Top.* 1.1.301.19–27. On this passage, see Militello 2017a, p. 116–17.

he mentions only the One, not Being, as a genus that is said of as many things as the Something, or even more.[11]

In other passages, before introducing Aristotle's opinion on a given topic, Alexander mentions the Stoic perspective on the same issue, pointing out that it is wrong. For example, in the commentary on the *Topics*, an *excursus* on the nature of universals is introduced as the true theory of the status of genus, which is contrasted with the false opinions that make genera as either 'existing by themselves to some degree' (καθ' αὑτά [...] ὑφεστῶτά που) [12] or 'mere concepts without existence' (ψιλὰ χωρὶς ὑπάρξεως νοήματα).[13] The two opinions that Alexander refutes are clearly representative of the Platonic theory of Ideas and of the Stoic view on universals, respectively. After these polemical references, Alexander introduces his own Aristotelian take on universals, which he considers as essential features accidentally shared by more than one individual.[14] It can be argued that the accidental nature of universals is, together with the primacy of form over matter, one of the two doctrines at the core of Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle. In short, Aristotelian theory is explicitly introduced as a response to the assertions on the same subject made by the other schools. It is important to highlight that the reference to the Platonic and Stoic theories on universals is made by Alexander at the beginning of his own analysis of the topic. The Aristotelian view is introduced as the correct opinion in a debate which involves all the different philosophical schools. When Alexander approaches the problem of the ontological status of universals, he first cites the wrong solutions provided by the other schools, and only then mentions the correct one, that is, the Aristotelian one.

Most importantly, in two cases, Alexander introduces not just a single Aristotelian doctrine, but an entire work by the Stagirite, locating it in the context of the debates between the Peripatetic school and its adversaries, mainly the Stoics. Alexander's commentary on the *Topics* opens with a critical survey of the different defi-

[11] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 1.6.359.12–16. On this passage, see Militello 2017a, p. 117–20.

[12] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 4.5.355.12.

[13] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 4.5.355.13.

[14] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 4.5.355.12–356.2. On this passage, see Militello 2017a, p. 111–12.

nitions of dialectic given by the Stoics, Plato and the Peripatetics. The subsequent commentary is framed in the context of a rebuttal of the views of the other schools, particularly the Stoics. As a matter of fact, the reason why one should study the *Topics*, that is, dialectic as defined by Aristotle, is that this is the true dialectic, as opposed to what Stoics and Platonists think. Specifically, Alexander shows that the definitions of dialectic provided by Platonists and Stoics do not agree with the meaning that the verb διαλέγεσθαι has for ordinary people. On the contrary, Aristotle's definition of the dialectical method is totally consistent with the common use of the words that are cognate with διαλεκτική. As a matter of fact, Aristotle says that dialectic is 'the method of (a) syllogizing (b) about every issue (c) through things approved',[15] and this is exactly what two people who discuss a question (διαλέγονται), do. They pick (b) whatever subject they want, one of them expresses his own view on that subject, the other asks him some questions about related topics, and the former answers (c) referring to commonly accepted opinions, that as such should be accepted by anyone, including the questioner. However, with his interrogation the questioner tries to educe such answers that, (a) combined, contradict the answerer's original statement. There is no such correspondence between the common meaning of διαλέγεσθαι and Plato's definition of dialectic as the method of division or the Stoics' view of dialectic as the art of saying the truth.[16] This kind of refutation of non-Aristotelian definitions can also be found in Alexander's treatises.[17] For example, in his *On Fate*, Alexander remarks that the Stoic definition of chance (τύχη) does not apply to what people commonly refer to as happening by chance.[18] Now, the conclusion of Alexander's analysis directly leads to the first statements of the *Topics*. In his proem, Alexander argues that 'dialectic has its being not in syllogizing through true statements, but in <syllogizing> through statements that are admitted'.[19] In

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[15] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 1 prooemium 3.6–7; trans. Van Ophuijsen 2001, p. 4.

[16] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 1 prooemium 1.8–3.24. On this passage, see Militello 2017a, p. 48–49, 66–67.

[17] See Sharples 1983, p. 18, for Alexander appealing to the usual meaning of words in *On Fate*.

[18] Alex. Aphr., *Fat*. 8.174.11–13. On τύχη in Aristotle, see Cardullo 2014.

[19] Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 1 prooemium 3.21–23.

the first chapter of the *Topics*, Aristotle explains exactly how dialectical syllogisms, whose premises are admitted by most people or by wise men, differ from demonstrative syllogisms, which are based on what is true and primary.[20] The analysis of the debate between schools culminates in the study of Aristotle. More generally, Alexander has justified the commentary on the *Topics* by showing that, if one is interested in the real dialectic, one should study what Aristotle has said on this subject, since the other philosophers are wrong about the definition of dialectic itself.

Similarly, at the very beginning of the commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, Alexander discusses the different answers to two questions which only arose after Aristotle's death: Is logic a part or an instrument of philosophy? And are there useless parts of logic? Alexander first confutes the Stoic answers to these questions, then proceeds to reject the Stoic objection that, if logic and particularly syllogistic are just instruments for the Peripatetics, then they do not value these arts. Alexander argues that, for Aristotle's followers, syllogistic is indeed extremely worthy, as the highest good for human beings is knowing the truth, something that can only be achieved by demonstration, which is a kind of syllogism. These notes seamlessly lead to a focus on the commented work, because, as Alexander explains to his readers, in the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle examines syllogisms in general in order to be able to focus on demonstrative syllogisms at a later stage.[21] Again, the reason why one should study the Aristotelian work that Alexander is commenting on is explained in the context of a debate with the Stoics.

The commentaries are interestingly similar to the treatises in this regard. In both cases, the controversy between the Aristotelian and the Stoic schools is mentioned at the very beginning of the work, as the framework of Alexander's approach to the subject matter. Jaap Mansfeld has shown that, in three of his treatises (*De fato*, *De prouidentia*, *De mixtione*), Alexander introduces the issue he deals with by means of a review of the opinions held by the different philosophical schools.[22] This confirms that Alexander has

[20] Arist., *Top*. 1.1.100a27–100b23.

[21] Alex. Aphr., *in APr*. 1 prooemium 1.3–6.32. On this passage, see Militello 2017a, p. 79–81.

[22] Mansfeld 1988. See also Adamson 2018.

the same attitude to the issue he tackles in the commentaries and in the treatises. In both cases, Alexander explains what Aristotle has said *and also* confutes the wrong opinions of the Stoics on the same topic.

3. *The Link between Polemics and Interpretation*

In order to understand *why* the debates with the Stoics are an organic part of Alexander's commentaries on Aristotle, we should turn to Alexander's *On Mixture and Increase*. At the beginning of Chapter 13, after confuting the Stoic idea that two different substances can be completely mixed, Alexander states that now he is going to explain Aristotle's thinking on this matter, because this, having been expressed by the Stagirite himself too tersely, is unfamiliar to many philosophers.[23] The statement that Aristotle's succinctness (συντομία) is the reason why many scholars ignore his thought makes more sense if one considers that often, in his commentaries on Aristotle's works, Alexander states that a given passage is obscure (ἀσαφής) because of its conciseness (συντομία).[24] In other words, Alexander is saying that it is useful to describe Aristotle's opinion more explicitly than he himself did, because doing so will make Aristotle's thought clearer and, as a consequence, more widely known. After explaining Aristotle's opinion about blending, he concludes that it is the only true theory of this topic. According to Aristotle, blending occurs when two moist bodies that have opposite forms are juxtaposed in such a way that they share the same matter and their powers balance out, the result being the production of a single quality. Since this is the only theory that agrees with both the facts and the common view on the subject, it is clear that it represents the truth.[25] Alexander then moves onto what the Stagirite said on growth, that is, that

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[23] Alex. Aphr., *Mixt.* 13.228.7–10.

[24] Alex. Aphr., *in APr.* 1.16.210.21; 1.27.299.21–22; 1.38.368.34–35; *in APo.* 20.25–26; *in Mete.* 3.9.131.5; *in Metaph.* 4.1.240.30.

[25] Alex. Aphr., *Mixt.* 15.232.31–233.2. Alexander also highlights how Aristotle's statements are consistent with 'common preconceptions about mixture' (τὰς περὶ τῆς κράσεως κοινὰς προλήψεις), once again drawing attention to how only Peripatetic philosophy agrees with the view of the world that every human being shares.

a living body grows when the food it receives from the outside is evenly distributed through its parts, with the result that its shape does not change even though its mass increases.[26] In the very last sentence of the treatise, Alexander explains why it is good to know what Aristotle said on the subject of growth. As a matter of fact, Alexander states that, after knowing the truth about growth, this concept will no longer be of any service (συντελεῖν) to the Stoics, who think that growth is nothing else than a body going through another body.[27] These texts, taken together, suggest that here Alexander means that, if someone like him will make Aristotle's opinion less obscure, everyone will know it and understand that it is the only true opinion. As a consequence, nobody will support a different theory, that is, there will be a definitive solution to every philosophical debate; indeed, there will be no more debates. Explaining Aristotle's words is the same as solving all the problems that are discussed in philosophy. The goal behind Alexander's exposition of Aristotle's works is to show the ultimate answer to all the questions discussed in the philosophical schools, and to reply once and for all to the Stoics. Explaining Aristotle's words means unfolding the one true philosophy against the false opinions held by the rival schools. It is not by chance that, in *On Mixture*, Alexander first depicts and criticises the theories of the Atomists, the Epicureans and above all the Stoics (Chapters 2–12), and only then explains how to tackle the problem in the Aristotelian way, because this allows us to solve the problem once and for all (Chapters 13–16). The interpretation of Aristotle's position provides the reply to the other schools.

The link between the interpretation of Aristotle's view and anti-Stoic polemics explains why Alexander often criticises the Stoics in his commentaries. Indeed, it is natural that he does so, given that the explanation of Aristotle is presented as the last word in all philosophical debates. The example of the imagined repartee with the Stoic opponent on the topic of the Something is particularly telling. As I have noted, Alexander seemingly strays from the simple exemplification of Aristotle's *topos*. Now, however, we can see that this is no deviation from the original plan.

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[26] Alex. Aphr., *Mixt.* 16.
[27] Alex. Aphr., *Mixt.* 16.238.20–23.

Alexander comments on Aristotle in order to show that the other philosophers are wrong; thus, the focus on the debate about the Something being or not being the highest genus is an integral part of the interpretation of Aristotle. Moreover, if the need to explain Aristotle's theories arises from the context of inter-school polemics, it is hardly surprising to find a comparison between the Aristotelian and the Stoic positions at the very beginning of two of Alexander's commentaries.

We are now able to see what philosophy is for Alexander. Philosophers consider questions. Aristotle gave the true answer, or at least the principles from which it is possible to deduce the true answer, to all the questions. If everyone knew Aristotle's answer, everyone would adhere to it, and there would be no conflict of opinions. But Aristotle expressed himself concisely, and concise writing is obscure writing. Aristotle expounded his views in an obscure way. As a result, many philosophers do not understand them. The result is that, by not knowing the truth, they formulate false hypotheses. To achieve the desired result, that is, the unanimity of all philosophers in adhering to the true theory, it is necessary for someone to explain Aristotle's thought clearly. This is the task Alexander takes upon himself. He explains Aristotle in order to show that philosophers who do not really know him are wrong, and that the truth is different.

The proem of the commentary on the *Topics* is particularly significant from this point of view. The structure of the argument expounded in the proem is as follows. (1) One wants to study dialectic. (2) There are various opinions about what dialectic is: Plato's, Aristotle's, the Stoics'. (3) The comparison with the common meaning of διαλέγεσθαι shows that the right definition is Aristotle's. This structure is basically the same as that of *On Mixture*: (1) discussed topic, (2) exposition of the different opinions on the topic, (3) exposition of Aristotelian theory, which is the true one, as the agreement with the common meaning of the relevant words proves. Indeed, if one considers that the proem directly flows into the commentary proper,[28] the whole commentary on the

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[28] The continuity between the proem and the commentary proper is indirectly proven by the debate on the propriety of speaking of a proem to begin with. Alexander's commentaries usually begin with a brief introduction, which precedes the exegesis of the first *lemma*; but it is not clear whether this is also

Topics can be seen as having the same structure, even though, in this case, the third section would take up most of the work, as, in the proem, (1) the topic of dialectic is introduced and (2) the different opinions on this topic are listed; and then, in the commentary proper, (3) the Aristotelian take is explained, with the comments on the single *lemmata* often showing why Aristotle's statements are correct.

Summing up, Alexander of Aphrodisias thinks that Aristotle solved all the questions that philosophers argue about (or, at least, found the principles from which one can solve them). There are different philosophical schools only because Aristotle's thought, having been originally expressed in a rather obscure way, is not really known to everybody. In Alexander's opinion, philosophical polemics are born out of ignorance—more precisely, ignorance of Aristotle's opinion. If everybody knew the real opinion of the Stagirite, all philosophers would be Peripatetic, and there would be no more intellectual conflicts. As a consequence, it is necessary for someone who has read and understood the works of Aristotle to explain them in a way that everybody can understand. It is thus evident how Alexander's exegetical activity directly stems from the debates between the different schools, first of all between Peripatetics and Stoics. It is not by chance that Alexander's commentaries on Aristotle feature several critical references to the Stoics. Since the study of the philosophy of Aristotle has been

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the case for the commentary on the *Topics*. As we have seen, this work begins with a meditation by Alexander on dialectic, not by quoting the first sentence of the *Topics* (100a18–21), which in reality is never cited as a *lemma*, because the first of the *lemmata*, on 7.3, is the next proposition (beginning at 100a21). The question then arises as to how to consider the first six pages of the commentary. Wallies calls the introductory section of the work a 'prooemium', but it ends up on 5.16, because on the next line there is a sentence in which Alexander mentions the debut of the *Topics*: the text that runs from p. 5.17 (or 27, because it is at this point that Alexander deals with the first words of Aristotle) up to 7.2 is therefore considered to be a comment on the *incipit* of the *Topics*. A reason for considering the first five pages as a proem is that, as I just wrote, an introduction is also present in other commentaries by Alexander. Moreover, the subject would be the same as the other proems, because Alexander treats the subject of the work first, as it defines dialectic (1.8–3.24; also, in relation to rhetoric, 3.25–5.16), and then the title (5.17–27). According to Van Ophuijsen, on the other hand, since the commentary begins with a reference to Aristotle's first words, there is no real introduction: all of the first six pages are to be considered rather as a commentary on the *incipit* of the *Topics* (Van Ophuijsen 2001, p. 135, n. 2).

undertaken with the aim of replying to the other schools, it is natural for Alexander to show how the doctrines that one finds in the works of the Stagirite allow us to expose the error in the opinions of the Stoics. Indeed, in at least two cases, the whole commentary is explicitly framed in the context of the polemics against the Stoics. One of the main reasons why Alexander interprets Aristotle is that doing so serves his criticism of the Stoics.

4. *A Broader Look at Alexander's Thought*

Let us go back to the problem of the differences between treatises and commentaries. One of the differences between the two is the audience, as the treatises are directed at a larger, less specialised audience.[29] By and large, the treatises are intended for the general public, but the commentaries for students of Aristotelian philosophy.[30] As a consequence, it is more important to confute the tenets of the other schools in the treatises, while the main aim of the commentaries is to explain what Aristotle meant.[31] In both cases, it is important to prove Aristotle right: in the treatises, this is mainly done by comparing the Peripatetic doctrine with other opinions; in the commentaries, it is mostly a matter of explaining what the Stagirite wrote.

I do not deny all these differences between commentaries and treatises. I just argue that polemics plays an important role in the commentaries too, even though, inevitably, in a different form. One could say that, in the treatises, a topic is addressed and the opinions of the different schools on it are compared. Showing that the Aristotelian take is the right one goes hand in hand with listing the errors of the other philosophers. As for the commentaries, I have distinguished three kinds of polemical references, each of which may have a different meaning. First of all, there are the criticisms of the other schools based on the principle stated by Aristotle in the commented *lemma*. In this case, the criticism of Stoic (or Platonic) doctrine seems to be a case of Alexander realising that he could use this Aristotelian tenet when he has

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[29] See Accattino & Donini 1996, p. xi.
[30] See, e.g., Todd 1976, p. 15–16; Fazzo 2005, p. 294.
[31] See, e.g., Todd 1976, p. xi.

to discuss how different schools addressed that topic. If he will devote a treatise to that topic, he will be able to draw on the note in the commentary and use that Aristotelian passage against the Stoics. Then there are the critical references to the Stoic ideas in the *excursuses* embedded in the commentaries. One can see these *excursuses* as mini treatises, as they show the same elements that structure the treatises: a topic of discussion; the wrong opinions of the non-Aristotelian philosophers; the Aristotelian take, which is proven to be right. A third kind of anti-Stoic reference in the commentaries can be found in the preliminary discussion in the proems. These references sound like a reminder to the reader, who is particularly interested in what Aristotle said, of why studying his works is the right thing to do. For instance, before commenting on Aristotle's *Topics*, Alexander assures his audience that this is the best work on dialectic, as the other philosophers do not even know what this discipline is. If the treatises are meant to persuade us to choose Aristotle, to devote oneself to his works and read commentaries on them, in the proems of the commentaries, Alexander refers back to those appeals. In any case, the proems have the same aim as the treatises: to assert the primacy of the Aristotelian treatment of the topic in hand.

Once one sees how interpretation and polemics are two faces of the same philosophical activity, it is possible to read Alexander's entire thought from this point of view. His preference for Aristotle cannot be separated from the criticism of all the other philosophers, as is clear from the passage that is often cited as the most explicit praise of Aristotle in Alexander's extant works. At the beginning of his *On the Soul*, Alexander states that it is not just in the case of psychology that he follows the Stagirite: 'I have great reverence for Aristotle's works on other subjects, since I find more truth in the views passed down from him than in what others have claimed'.[32] In the same breath Alexander states that the Peripatetic philosophy is the best way to understand reality, and positively compares it with the other doctrines. For Aristotelianism to be the best philosophy, it must be better than Stoicism, Platonism and the other schools of thought.

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[32] Alex. Aphr., *de An.* 1 prooemium 2.4–6; trans. Caston 2012, p. 31.

Indeed, if Alexander starts by surveying the theses of the different schools before asserting the superiority of one of them, he is not doing anything substantially different from Aristotle, who often, when dealing with a given topic, first lists the opinions of previous philosophers, before providing his own solution.

The link between the interpretation of Aristotle's texts and the polemics against the other schools can be found not only in Alexander's writings, but also in his professional activity. As the holder of the imperial chair of Aristotelian philosophy in Athens,[33] he had two main tasks: explaining the meaning of the works of Aristotle and debating with the other chairs, that is, the main exponents of the Stoic, Platonic and Epicurean schools. In blunt terms, winning disputes against the other professors meant persuading prospective students to enrol in the Aristotelian class, where Alexander would explain the real meaning of the writings of the Stagirite. This interpretation of Aristotle's texts was in turn the basis of Alexander's arguments in the debates with the other schools. Once again, the debate justifies the interpretation, which subsequently fuels the debate with new arguments.

For Alexander, philosophising is firstly a matter of discussing different options. We have seen how he conceives philosophy as a battlefield where different schools compete. Each philosophical question has been given a different answer by different schools, and one should consider the merit of each of these answers before determining which one is correct (even though, after several attempts, it would be natural to expect the Aristotelian answer to be the right one). Generally, Alexander tends to consider different solutions to the philosophical problems he tackles, not always picking one of them as his final answer. The same attitude can be found when Alexander explains an Aristotelian passage, as in that context, too, he sometimes considers different possible interpretations of the same passage, without feeling the need to opt for one. Of course, these interpretations often represent the opinion of different commentators; so, for Alexander, exegesis also represents a debate on various opinions. It would be odd, after all, if *interpreting* a text were fundamentally different from *discussing* a

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[33] Alexander held an imperial chair: Alex. Aphr., *Fat*. 1.164.13–15. Alexander taught in Athens: Chaniotis 2004a, p. 388; 2004b, p. 79.

problem for Alexander, given the close link he sees between the two activities. From all this, it is clear that, for Alexander, *doing* philosophy is discussing: discussing the opinions of different schools and different interpreters, discussing different solutions and different readings.[34]

Alexander's usage of the conjunction ἤ confirms that he considers the comparison of different options important and that there is a close link between discussing different options and solving a problem. As a matter of fact, Alexander, when reviewing an exegetical or philosophical problem, uses ἤ to introduce two different parts of the review. In some cases, after a given interpretation or solution has been reported, ἤ introduces a different way to answer the same question, to which Alexander does not seem to grant more or less weight than the original way. In these cases, we find one or more instances of ἤ in the enumeration of two or more interpretations/solutions: it is either x *or* y *or* z, and so on.[35] However, elsewhere, after a problem has been analysed, ἤ is prefixed to the—apparently one and only—solution.[36] The former usage confirms that Alexander tends to consider different answers to the same questions, as well as different opinions. The coexistence of the two meanings, which are seemingly opposite, suggests that Alexander sees the definite solution to a problem as one of the alternative hypotheses—more precisely, the alternative hypothesis that is right.

If my hypothesis is correct, i.e., if polemics is important to Alexander because philosophising means comparing all the possible answers to a given question, this may explain two peculiar features of his references to Stoic theories. Alexander refers more often to Chrysippus than to authors who are chronologically closer to him; and his reports on Stoic doctrines are not always faithful. He sometimes recasts the Stoic doctrines in a way that significantly departs from what historical Stoics stated.[37] However, it is not necessary to conclude that Alexander was ignorant of

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[34] On Alexander's opinion on *aporia*, see Kupreeva 2017.

[35] To mention just a few examples: Alex. Aphr., *in Metaph.* 2.2.159.9; 2.2.165.4; 2.3.169.11; *in Top.* 4.1.299.7; 4.1.299.17; 4.1.306.15.

[36] Some examples: Alex. Aphr., *in Top.* 4.1.300.10; 4.1.306.22; 4.2.308.19; *Quaest.* 1.5.13.17; 1.6.14.16; 1.7.15 31.

[37] Todd 1976.

recent developments in Stoicism, sloppy or even voluntarily partial in his reports. In fact, if what matters to him is to consider all the possible theories on each subject, it is normal that he does not focus on what real Stoics said, but rather on a standard version of Stoicism, which provides consistent (even though wrong) answers to each philosophical question. Alexander cares less about Chrysippus and Plato than about materialism and idealism. He does not want to show that the historical Chrysippus and the historical Plato were wrong, but rather that, in the atemporal battlefield of theoretical options that is philosophy, 'essentialism' (or whatever name we want to give to Alexander's version of Aristotelianism) is the correct middle ground between the vicious extremes of materialism and idealism. Alexander is interested in Stoicism as a general, coherent system, and this is one of the reasons why, in the twelfth chapter of *On Mixture*, he shows how all Stoic doctrines are based on the theory of blending. There, he even acknowledges that real Stoics are not aware of this general system.[38] Alexander's ideal opponent is someone who provides a complete and consistent reconstruction of Stoicism, just as he himself systematises Aristotelianism. Indeed, just as Alexander, while not ignoring the whole history of the Peripatetic tradition, starts from the founding texts of this tradition, i.e., from Aristotle's treatises, so his ideal opponent has Chrysippus as his point of reference.

The framework presented here also allows us to understand why Alexander is often influenced by Plato and the Stoics. It may seem that the statement that Alexander's primary aim is always (that is, not only in the treatises, but also in the commentaries) to confute the tenets of the other schools is disproved by various instances of Platonic and Stoic influences on his vocabulary and theories. However, this is arguably not the case. On the contrary, these influences can be perfectly explained in the context of the attitude towards philosophy that I ascribed to Alexander. He sees philosophy as a set of problems, to which different schools have proposed different solutions. Aristotle is the philosopher who has come closest to the truth, but this is not the same as saying that he got everything right, that he dealt with all the possible topics one can come up with, or that the other schools are always wrong.

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[38] Alex. Aphr., *Mixt*. 12.226.34–227.10.

It is significant that, in his most often quoted praise of Aristotle (see above) Alexander does not claim that Aristotle's statements are always true, but that they are generally 'more true' than the opinions of the other philosophers. This leaves space for selectively and carefully accepting what non-Aristotelians have said. Of course, it may be the case that some of the non-Aristotelian parts of Alexander's thought were probably unconscious borrowings. I am not insisting that the philosopher was always aware of the fact that he was taking a page out of Plato's *Dialogues* or of a Stoic book. However, at least in some cases, he did know that he was citing thinkers from a different school,[39] and arguably this was not an issue for him, if he conceived philosophy as a fair battlefield of ideas.

5. *Exegesis and Polemics. A Complex Relationship*

I have argued that Alexander's exegetical activity is motivated by his polemical attitude towards the other schools. However, the relationship between interpretation and polemics is more complex than this. Even remaining in the realm of a simple two-term connection between exegesis on Aristotle and debates with the other schools, some texts imply a relationship that is totally opposite to the one I have argued for so far, as in these instances, polemics is introduced as an explanatory method. It is therefore necessary to conceive the interrelation between exegesis and *diatribe* as something complex. I have tried to argue that Alexander's statements in his *On Mixture* hint at a theory that considers the explanation of Aristotle's texts as the solution to philosophical debates, and that it is not by chance that Alexander first mentions the theories of the Stoics and then gives his account of Aristotle's opinion. However, what Alexander says at the beginning of *On Fate* is practically the opposite:

> But since some doctrines become more clearly established by argument against those who do not hold a similar position (and I think this applies especially to the present one), when I have spoken in accordance with the position of Aristotle I

[39] For example, Alexander could not ignore that he was mentioning the fourth Stoic indemonstrable at Alex. Aphr., *in Top*. 1.1.11.22–25; 1.1.12.5–27.

will argue against those who have adopted a different position from him on these matters, so that in the comparison of the positions the truth may become clearer to you.[40]

Here, Alexander portrays the criticisms of the other schools as one of the ways to better explain what Aristotle meant. What matters is knowing the truth, that is, understanding what Aristotle said or what can be deduced from the principles he laid down. In some cases, a good way to gain this insight is by comparing the Aristotelian doctrine with the opinions of the philosophers belonging to other schools, showing that the latter are wrong. This is why, in his treatise, Alexander will first explain the Aristotelian take on fate (Chapters 2–6) and only then confute the Stoic theses (Chapters 7–39). In fact, in the transition from the first to the second part of the treatise, Alexander repeats the same principles:

> And this is, to state it in a summary fashion, the opinion concerning fate of the Peripatetic school. What has been stated will be more clearly established if, alongside the preceding demonstrations of the established position, we place the absurdities that follow for those who say that all things come to be in accordance with fate. For by this discussion we will both make the truth more easily understood, by the placing of the doctrines beside each other, and in addition to this we will not find it necessary to mention the same subjects on many occasions.[41]

This passage confirms that, in *On Fate*, Alexander wants to explain the Peripatetic thesis on the discussed topic; and only in order to make this explanation clearer, he compares it with the opinion of the Stoics. Of course, there is a rhetorical motivation behind this structure, as it downplays the role of the Stoics to mere sparring partners to the holders of the truth, who are of course the Aristotelians. However, Alexander justifies this structure with a sound reasoning which cannot be ignored. The result is that we are faced with two opposite perspectives: in *On Mixture*, philosophy is introduced as a debate between different schools, explaining that Aristotle is necessary because he allows to end the debate; in

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40 Alex. Aphr., *Fat*. 1.165.1–5; trans. Sharples 1983, p. 41.
41 Alex. Aphr., *Fat*. 6.171.16–7.171.22; trans. Sharples 1983, p. 48.

On Fate, philosophy is about grasping the truth, which is the same as explaining the Peripatetic doctrine, while the debate against the other schools is just a means to better understand what the Aristotelians intend.[42]

One clue to help us understand the connection between polemics and interpretation may be the references to the idea that comparing different opinions allows the truth to better stand out. According to Aristotle, this principle is one of the reasons why dialectic is useful to philosophy.[43] Indeed, Alexander mentions it in both the quoted passages from *On Fate*. Furthermore, in these passages, Alexander refers to the κατασκευή of the Aristotelian position, which is the technical term used in Aristotle's *Topics* to refer to the establishment of a position through dialectical means. In the second passage, Alexander also states that the previous explanation for the Aristotelian position is an ἀπόδειξις, that is, a case of those scientific demonstrations that Aristotle opposes to dialectical arguments. It looks as though Alexander thinks that one can prove the Aristotelian take on a given subject both scientifically and dialectically, and that, in the second case, the proof involves the confutation of the opinions of the other schools.[44] Since one of the main exegetical means used by Alexander is the reformulation of Aristotle's arguments into scientific syllogisms, one could argue that the relationship between interpretation and polemics is parallel to the one between scientific demonstration and dialectical proof. As we have seen, in the polemical section of both the treatises and the commentaries, Alexander refers to the meaning given by common people to the words that are relevant

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[42] *On the Soul* may be close to *On Fate* under this respect: see Accattino & Donini 1996, p. x. Caston 2012, p. 2–3.

[43] Arist., *Top*. 1.2.101a34–36.

[44] This hypothesis may have an effect on how one should interpret and translate the passage from the thirteenth chapter of the *De mixtione* I mentioned. This is how it was translated by Todd: 'Apart from the preceding theories the one worth expounding is that held by Aristotle. Let us describe it (εἴπωμεν [...] περὶ ταύτης) and explain its character (δείξωμεν τίς ποτ' ἐστίν), since it is not known to the majority of the philosophers on account of the brevity of its treatment by the philosopher himself' (Todd 1976, p. 147). The technical sense of δείκνυμι is 'to demonstrate', but there also is the common sense 'to show', so Alexander's phrase means either to demonstrate Aristotle's opinion or to show what it is. The fact that, elsewhere, Alexander calls his own explanation of Aristotle's thought a demonstration is a reason to opt for the former option.

to the discussed problem. This reference now looks particularly significant, as it seems to be a case of appealing to ἔνδοξα (commonly held opinions), which is a common strategy in dialectic. This confirms the relationship between polemics and dialectic. Studying how Alexander conceived the roles of demonstration and dialectic in philosophy may help us understand the interrelationships between the exegesis of Aristotle's works and the criticism of the Stoics.

It is not just a matter of Alexander taking frequent jabs at the Stoics in his commentaries, as the core of his interpretation of Aristotle can itself be seen as a reaction to Stoic doctrines. In his seminal book on Alexander's 'essentialism', Marwan Rashed has shown that Alexander's Aristotelianism is shaped by his belief that every being should be analysed in terms of form and matter, with the former element being primary. Rashed also suggested that Alexander developed the idea that the form is superior to both the matter and the compound, in contrast to the interpretation of Aristotle's thought, as proposed by Boethus of Sidon.[45] Now, Boethus' version of Aristotelianism was deeply influenced by Stoic doctrines.[46] Since Alexander developed his doctrine of the form as a polemical reply to Boethus' ontology, which was influenced by the Stoics, it is fair to state that one of the central doctrines of Alexander's Aristotelianism builds on a refusal of Stoic ontology. Alexander's criticism of Boethus is a rejection of any influence of Stoicism on the core of Peripatetic metaphysics.

Indeed, the whole project of Alexander's career, which was—as has been stated more and more clearly by recent scholarship—to organise Aristotle's theses into a coherent system, can be viewed as the culmination of an attempt to show that Peripatetic philosophy was as orderly as the Stoics claimed theirs to be, an attempt which had already begun with Andronicus of Rhodes' arrangement of Aristotle's works.[47]

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[45] Rashed 2007.

[46] Reinhardt 2007, p. 526–27; Griffin 2015, p. 179. According to Rashed, Boethus was influenced by the Stoics, even though he must be considered an Aristotelian, not an eclectic philosopher, also because he attacks some Stoic doctrines (Rashed 2013).

[47] Hatzimichali 2016, p. 98.

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Abstract

It may seem that, while in his treatises Alexander uses the principles of Aristotelian philosophy to address problems that are often typical of the Imperial age, in his commentaries on Aristotle he is simply concerned with explaining Aristotle's words. However, it has been convincingly argued that all Alexander's works—commentaries and treatises alike—are equally exegetical. In this paper, I argue that all Alexander's works are also equally polemical, and, as a consequence, that the controversy between the Aristotelian school and the other schools (above all, the Stoic one) is foundational to Alexander's version of Aristotelianism. As a matter of fact, in his commentaries Alexander often chooses to focus on those Aristotelian sentences that can form the basis for a polemical argument against the Stoics. The controversy between the Aristotelian and the Stoic schools is also mentioned at the very beginning of two commentaries, as the framework of Alexander's approach to the Aristotelian treatise.

PART 2
BIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE

OLIVIER DEMERRE

HERMOGENES' *LIFE*
STYLISTIC DEBATES AND CIRCLES
IN PHILOSTRATUS' *LIVES OF THE SOPHISTS**

1. *Introduction*

Hermogenes, who was born at Tarsus, by the time he was fifteen had attained such a reputation as a sophist that even the Emperor Marcus became eager to hear him. At any rate Marcus made the journey to hear him declaim, and was delighted with his formal discourse, but marvelled at him when he declaimed extempore, and gave him splendid presents. But when Hermogenes arrived at manhood his ability to speak suddenly deserted him, though this was not due to any apparent disease, and this provided the envious with an occasion for their wit. For they declared that his words were in very truth 'winged' as Homer says, and that Hermogenes had moulted them, like wing-feathers. And once Antiochus the sophist, jesting at his expense, said: 'Lo, here is that fellow Hermogenes, who among boys was an old man, but among the old is a boy'. The following will show the style of speech that he affected. In a speech that he was delivering before Marcus, he said, 'You see before you, Emperor, an orator who still needs an attendant to take him to school, an orator who still looks to come of age'. He said much more of this sort and in the same facetious vein. He died at a ripe old age, but accounted as one among many, for he became despised when his art left him.[1]

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[1] Philostr., *VS* 577–78; The translations of Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, henceforth abridged to *VS*, are adapted from Wright 1921. The Greek text is from Stefec 2016.

The account of Hermogenes' life in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* is uncanny, both taken alone and within the corpus of the *Lives*.[2] It recounts the trajectory of a child prodigy who dashes everyone's expectations: declaiming in front of the emperor Marcus Aurelius during his teenage years, he must endure the mockeries of other sophists when he unexpectedly loses his ability to speak. This account is at odds with the works of the rhetorician Hermogenes, who composed, in the second half of the second century, a treatise on *stasis-* (or issue-) theory and another on *idea*-theory.[3] Later commentators of Hermogenes have tried to reconcile Philostratus' version of events with the treatises which they possessed: Hermogenes, they conclude, met Marcus Aurelius at age 15 and wrote his treatises between the age of 18 and 25, before his mental impairment.[4] In addition, Hermogenes' *Life* stands out from other records in the *VS* because its protagonist is not connected to other sophists. Even though the sophist Antiochus is mentioned in the life, the exact nature of his relationship with Hermogenes is unknown. Whether Hermogenes heard Antiochus' *bon mot* is textually unclear.[5] The absence of connection is unusual for a work in which professional genealogy is carefully described: in addition to Hermogenes, only three other sophists out of forty-two, Varus

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[2] When I use the term 'life', I do not mean that Philostratus gives a biographical account in the way that a modern reader or a reader contemporary to Philostratus would expect. See Anderson 1986, p. 23–41; Swain 1991, p. 151; Noël 2000; Côté 2006, p. 19–20.

[3] The dates of composition of both treatises are debated. *On Issues* must precede *On Types of Style*, which could have been written towards the end of the second century or the beginning of the third: Patillon 2012, p. viii–ix. Both treatises must have been written before the *VS* because it mentions Hermogenes' death, probably around 230–40: Avotins 1978; Jones 2002; Kemezis 2014, p. 294–98. On Philostratus' life, see Bowie 2009.

[4] On Hermogenes' biography in early commentators, see Rabe 1907, p. 247–62; Radermacher 1912, p. 865–69; Lindberg 1997, p. 1985; Heath 1998a; 2004, p. 36–42. Amongst modern critics, only Patillon 1988, p. 13–16 and 2009, p. vii–xviii believes that Philostratus' Hermogenes is not the same person as the writer of the technical treatises. See Heath 1998a, p. 46–47.

[5] On Antiochus, see Philostr., *VS* 568–70; Avotins 1971, p. 67–80; Puech 2002, p. 68–74. If we accept that Hermogenes was born in 160s and to be consistent with the age which, according to Philostratus, Hermogenes had when he declaimed before Marcus, Antiochus' *bon mot* could have been uttered in the early 200s, when Hermogenes was 40, the age group covered by the word γηράσκουσι: Avotins 1971, p. 71.

of Perge, Varus of Laodicea and Heliodorus, do not appear to be connected with other sophists in the *VS*.[6]

I do not believe that Philostratus included Hermogenes in his work only 'for novelty value', as K. Eshleman claims.[7] M. Heath, on the contrary, argues that the content of Hermogenes' *Life* reflects both dramatic and theoretical concerns.[8] Philostratus, he claims, attempts to create 'tension': Hermogenes' performance in front of the emperor underlines his failure as an adult and exhibits his extravagant style.[9] Heath adds that Philostratus wishes to document a certain type of rhetoric, sophistic rhetoric. As soon as Hermogenes' gift for sophistic declamation left him, he fell beyond the scope of Philostratus' work, although it does not necessarily mean that Hermogenes no longer declaimed. These two concerns prompt us not only to find meaning in the inclusion of Hermogenes in the work but also not to accept at face value the information contained in the *Life*.[10]

In line with Heath's interpretation, I argue in this paper that Hermogenes' *Life*, far from being a reliable account of Hermogenes' life, should in fact be read as the dramatization of 1. rivalry between competing circles and 2. theoretical debates over rhetoric, which I broadly define as the systematic study of the discursive and non-discursive means of persuasion.[11] 1. The lack of connection could be interpreted as a sign of rejection of a rival. Hermogenes has written treatises which ambitioned to supplant treatises written by members of Philostratus' circle. 2. In addition, I argue that the account in Hermogenes' *Life* may be motivated by rhetorical, and in particular stylistic, debates. The passage from Hermogenes' childish speech which illustrates his style (ῥήτωρ παιδαγωγοῦ δεόμενος, ῥήτωρ ἡλικίαν περιμένων) contains parisoses,

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[6] Respectively Philostr., *VS* 576, 620 and 625–27. Unlike Andurand 2015, n. 25 but following Eshleman 2008/12, p. 129, I consider that Hermocrates (*VS* 608) is connected to other sophists in the *VS*.

[7] Eshleman 2008/12, p. 129.

[8] Heath 1998a, p. 44–47 and 2004, p. 35–36.

[9] To support his argument, Heath 2004, p. 37 points out that the *Life* of Philagrus, which follows that of Hermogenes, depicts a sophist whose early talents are confirmed once he reaches adulthood.

[10] Hermogenes' meeting with Marcus Aurelius is corroborated by Cassius Dio, see Dio Cassius 71.1.

[11] On the definition of rhetoric, see MacDonald 2017, p. 4–6.

a figure of speech which characterizes, as we will see, the style of Philostratean sophists. Yet, this style is scorned by Hermogenes in *On Types of Style*.[12] Philostratus' attribution of a speech bearing the hallmarks of sophistic rhetoric but which Hermogenes rejects as ineffective betrays not only a polemical motivation but also a knowledge of the rival's precepts. In this part, I will attempt to find other passages in the *VS* in which Philostratus possibly reacts to Hermogenes' rhetorical doctrine–or that of another rhetorician like Hermogenes. I will compare Hermogenes' reading list to the part in the *VS* containing the *Lives* of classical sophists. It will bring out the polemical character of the *VS*: Philostratus indeed subverts the definitions of key-concepts from rhetorical treatises. Philostratus claims in the *VS* that the introduction of poetical elements in a speech brings about persuasion; Hermogenes, on the contrary, contends that such poetical elements undermine the persuasive force of a speech. This discussion is inscribed within the frame of the rivalry between two types of rhetoric, one which I call 'sophistic' rhetoric and another which I call 'traditional' rhetoric.[13] The stance which Philostratus adopts towards rhetorical treatises is explained by Philostratus' project of documenting the history of sophistic rhetoric, conceived of as an anti- or parallel history of 'traditional' rhetoric.

2. *Hermogenes and Philostratus' Network*

In the first part of this paper, I argue that Hermogenes' lack of connections with other sophists in the *VS* could be motivated by the rivalry between different circles of sophists. Recent studies have investigated Philostratus' bias in the process of selecting sophists. B. Puech, for instance, shows that the number of orators who called themselves sophists in the second and third century is considerably larger than the number of sophists included in the *VS*. Other studies have found that the chosen sophists construct a consistent circle of interrelated members around Philostratus and

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[12] Heath 1998a, p. 45.

[13] The terms 'Asianists' and 'Atticist' have often been used but are inadequate, see Kim 2017, passim; for other terms, such as 'classical' and 'anti-classical', see Kim 2017, p. 58–60.

Herodes Atticus.[14] Hermogenes is not connected by Philostratus to other sophists of the *VS*, although Antiochus' joke appears to suggest that he was known to them. Yet, Hermogenes' treatises and early commentaries thereupon allow us to gather evidence of interactions with his intellectual milieu, including members of the entourage of sophists mentioned by Philostratus. These interactions suggest that the seclusion of Hermogenes in the *VS* is meaningful. However, due to the nature of the sources, to the low number of extant treatises on issue- and *idea*-theories and to the silence of Philostratus on the technical treatises written by his sophists, the reconstruction of Hermognes' interactions with other sophists is necessarily hypothetical. With this in mind, I will examine two connections between (close associates and family members of) sophists and Hermogenes.

In the two treatises which have come down to us, Hermogenes does not hesitate to slander contemporary orators whom he calls sophists.[15] He is also critical of preceding treatise-writers, as for instance at the outset of *On Types of Style*:

> To my knowledge, nobody before me has written to this date and on this subject any rigorous book, but all those who tried have spoken without order and mastery over their subject, so that all they said was confused non-sense.[16]

Hermogenes similarly blames preceding treatises in *On Issues*:

> Some of those who have, under the title of the art of rhetoric, written on the part concerned with division have tried to say that there are classes of counterstatement, and indeed of the other counterpositional issue.[17]

Ancient commentators have identified probable targets. Syrianus, the author of a commentary on *On Types of Style* in the fifth cen-

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[14] Schubert 1995; Puech 2002; Eschleman 2008/2012; Jones 2008; Andurand 2015.

[15] Hermog., *Id*. 377.10–378.10 in which Polus, Menon, Gorgias and 'a great deal of contemporary sophists' are criticised; see also *Id*. 248.25–249.12.

[16] Hermog., *Id*. 226.17–22. Translations are my own. Patillon 2012, p. 259, n. 23 mentions other passages in which Hermogenes takes issue with preceding rhetoricians in *On Types of Style*.

[17] Hermog., *Stat*. 74.16 f. Translation of *On Issues* are from Heath 1995.

tury, believes that Hermogenes specifically targets Basilicus in the first of the two passages quoted above.[18] In the second passage, the name of Minucianus is often mentioned by commentators as one of the main targets.[19]

The rhetoricians against whom Hermogenes directs his attacks may be related to members of Philostratus' circle of sophists. Philostratus, towards the end of the *VS*, mentions two sophists whom he claims are his close friends: Nicagoras of Athens and Apsines of Gadara.[20] One of Apsines' masters was Basilicus, the author of a treatise on *idea*-theory. Basilicus appears at the outset of Apsines' rhetorical treatise as an authority figure.[21] Moreover, Nicagoras of Athens is the grandson of Minucianus.[22] Besides these two obvious connections, Hermogenes' treatises compete with those written by Philostratus' sophists. For instance, we know that Lollianus, Zeno and perhaps Hadrian of Tyre have written on issue-theory.[23] There is still much scholarly uncertainty, however, regarding potential authors of *idea*-theory: the attribution of a treatise to Basilicus is beyond dispute; however, whether Dionysius of Miletus and Hadrian of Tyre have composed such treatises is still debated.[24]

[18] On this passage of Syrianus, *In Hermog.* 13.1–10 Rabe, see Patillon 2002, I, p. xvii–xviii and n. 21 on Basilicus of Nicomedia.

[19] See, e.g., [Syrianus] 684.25; on this passage, and for further examples, see Patillon 2009, p. 178, n. 6; Heath 1995, p. 128; on the rivalry between Hermogenes and Minucianus, see Gloeckner 1901, p. 26–49, 111–15; Ruiz-Yamuza 2004. On Minucianus, see Gloeckner 1901, p. 22–25; Stegemann 1932, p. 1975–1986; Heath 2004, p. 32–36.

[20] Philostr., *VS* 628.

[21] Apsines, *Art of Rhetoric* 1.331.7 Spengel. For an overview of Apsines' career and life, see Brzoska 1895, p. 277–83; Dilts & Kennedy 1997, p. xv–xvi; Patillon 2001, p. vii–ix; Puech 2002, p. 124–26; The attribution of the *Art* to Apsines has been challenged by Heath 1998b and 2004, p. 53–55 and 57–60; he does not dispute however the fact that Basilicus was Apsines' master. Apsines' *On Invention* exploits *idea*-theory: Heath 2004, p. 58 tentatively argues that he favoured Basilicus' theory although he could have known Hermogenes'—or someone else's—treatise on the subject.

[22] On this, see Schissel 1927a; Stegemann 1936; and the reservations of Heath 1996.

[23] For Lollianus, see *VS* 526–27. *Suda* λ 670 and, e.g., Schissel 1927b, p. 1373–1375; for Zeno, see *VS* 607, *Suda* ζ 81 and, e.g., Heath 2004, p. 24–28; his treatise certainly predates Hermogenes'. On Hadrian, see *VS* 585–90 and *Suda* α 528. Lollianus and Hadrian held the chair of Rhetoric at Athens: Avotins 1975, p. 315.

[24] Patillon 2002, I, p. xvii–xxii attributes Pseudo-Aristides 1 partly to Basilicus (thus agreeing with Schmid 1917–1918 p. 244), partly to Dionysius of Mile-

Our knowledge of the content of such treatises is very limited. Yet, the few passages of the *VS* in which technical treatises written by sophists are mentioned are mostly positive. For instance, the teaching of Zeno, who has produced a treatise on issue-theory which predates Hermogenes, is described by Philostratus as precise (τὸ περὶ τὴν τέχνην ἀκριβὲς ἐκείνου ἔμαθεν).[25] Yet, Hermogenes' treatises are not mentioned, even in passing. In this emulative environment, Philostratus may have been willing to disparage a potential rival to his circle.

3. *Hermogenes' Reading List and Philostratus' Ancient Sophists*

3.1. Characterisations of Sophists in Hermogenes' *On Types of Style*

Competition between networks could cast some light on Philostratus' uncanny account. Furthermore, this short examination of networks appears to suggest that at least some sophists are not only practictioners but also theoreticians of rhetoric.[26] Philostratus' interest in the technical aspects of the sophists' speeches is reflected in the *VS* in the description of the styles of the sophists which he mentions. Philostratus is at the very least aware of contemporary technical debates: not only the *VS* but also several of his works appear to suggest that he was familiar with stylistic theory.[27] I will now suggest that the use and definition of stylistic terms in the description of the sophists' styles are indebted to a great extent to theoretical treatises such as Hermogenes' *On Types of Style*. Philostratus certainly did not adapt this vocabulary from

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tus, and Patillon 2002, II, p. 16, Pseudo-Aristides 2 to Aelius (and not Valerius) Harpocration. Heath 2004, p. 48, n. 80 rejects Dionysius.

[25] Philostr., *VS* 607.

[26] It is true that Philostratus does not often mention the technical works of the sophists and that writers of technical treatises are only mentioned in passing, when mentioned at all, often in connection with one of the sophists to whom they have taught: Anderson 1986, p. 8–10 and 23–38; Heath 2004, p. 27–28.

[27] See Prioux 2015 on the *Imagines*. Webb 1992 argues that the same Philostratus wrote both the *VS* and the *Imagines*.

Hermogenes alone.[28] Besides Hermogenes, Philostratus could potentially have used original speeches, technical productions, later commentaries to part or all the works, general stylistic treatises as those of Hermogenes, and later *testimonia* in *miscellanea* or literary works.[29] In a short but compelling study, I. Rutherford points out in the stylistic vocabulary of the *Lives* 'terminological similarities to *Peri Ideon*, *Peri Politikou Logou*, and *Peri Aphelous Logou*, but conceptual differences'. He makes two hypotheses: either Philostratus 'adapted' his stylistic vocabulary from earlier rhetorical treatises, 'appropriating the classicizing literary stylistics for the more vigorous environment of sophistic declamation', or he draws on contemporary works 'concerned with contemporary criticism'.[30] Rutherford subsequently identifies stylistic terms which are used by Hermogenes, Pseudo-Aristides and Philostratus but which are not found in preceding stylistic treatises which have come down to us. These terms, he concludes, are suggestive of a sophistic influence on Hermogenes' treatises.[31] It is very likely that Hermogenes was to a great extent influenced by contemporary rhetorical practice, as Rutherford convincingly argues. His system is not entirely new and relies on earlier works: perhaps under the influence either of monographs on individual authors such as Xenophon and orators such as Demosthenes or of oratorical practice, idea-theoreticians developed new tools while redefining pre-existing ones.[32] However, I wish to suggest that

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[28] See for instance Rutherford 1998. I will focus, for reasons of space, on synchronicity, and only treat sources roughly contemporary to Philostratus.

[29] Studies on the sources of Philostratus have so far focused on second sophists, see for instance Swain 1991, p. 148 and 155; Brunt 1994, p. 25. To my knowledge, the only article devoted to the construction of the section on ancient sophists is Noël 2000. However, she focuses mostly on the links between Pseudo-Plutarchus' *Lives of the Ten Orators* and does not consider Hermogenes' *On Types of Style* as a possible intertext.

[30] Rutherford 1998, p. 25–26.

[31] Rutherford 1998, p. 25–36.

[32] Hagedorn 1964 remains the most extensive study of the origins of *idea*-theory; see also Patillon 1988, p. 105–10 and passim, and 2002, p. xxiii–lxiv and 1–15; see also Pernot 1993, p. 1.339–52; Rutherford 1998, especially p. 22–36, sees an influence of sophistic rhetoric in the emergence of specific terms. Besides Hermogenes' work on *idea*-theory, we possess a treatise in two books (one on political discourse, another on simple discourse) falsely attributed to Aelius Aristides. There is strong ground to believe that Pseudo-Aristides' treatise predates

Philostratus was also aware of contemporary technical treatises; moreover, Philostratus does not simply appropriate stylistic tools, but rather defines his project against rhetorical treatises when using these tools. Their displacement from their traditional, rhetorical, setting, because it was consciously and carefully operated by Philostratus, is meaningful, and I will investigate the implications and mechanisms of the displacement. I wish to show that Philostratus responds to the criticisms of treatises against the style of sophists. In order to do so, I will first outline how Hermogenes constructs the sophistic style. I will subsequently compare the descriptions of the styles of sophists who appear in both the *VS* and *On Types of Style*.

Hermogenes' *On Types of Style* aims to provide students with analytical tools which will also improve their writing and stylistic skills.[33] A beautiful speech is the result of the harmonious sum of the different types of style (*ideai*). The *ideai* themselves are composed of smaller units: thought, method, figures, diction, arrangement, rhythm and pause.[34] The first mention of the sophists in *On Types of Style* is found in the section dedicated to the diction (λέξις) of nobility (σεμνότης).[35] The second time, they are found in the description of forcefulness (δεινότης). The last attack against sophistic style, although not directed specifically against sophists but rather against Isocrates, is found in the description of the *idea* of beauty (κάλλος).[36]

For Hermogenes, σεμνότης is a sub-*idea* of grandeur. It is achieved when discussing gods or great actions of men. The debate between Hermogenes and the sophists revolves around the correct use of metaphors, a verbal means (λέξις) which achieves grandeur. Hermogenes distinguishes between four degrees of metaphors,

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that of Hermogenes. See Baumgart 1874, p. 137–233; Schmid 1917–1918; Patillon 1988, p. 105–07; 2002, p. 1.1–3; Heath 2004, p. 48.

[33] Hermog., *Id*. 213.1–14. On this twofold aspect of Hermogenes' training, see Patillon 1988, p. 103–05; 2012, p. cxviii–cxx; Rutherford 1992, p. 373, n. 70.

[34] A survey of the components of Hermogenes' system is found in Patillon 1988, p. 116–278; see also Lindberg 1997, p. 2005–2044; Rutherford 1998, p. 10–18; Patillon 2012, p. xxxiv–cxviii.

[35] Hermogenes' other treatise, *On Issues*, does not contain the word 'sophist'.

[36] Although in Hermogenes' treatise Beauty is dealt with before forcefulness, the criticism is less clearly directed at the sophists. This is why I choose not to follow the same order.

from the most moderate (μετρίως, repeated three times in three lines) and easy to understand to the heaviest (παχύς), cheapest (εὐτελής) and most obscure. The first three degrees of metaphors are exemplified with excerpts from Demosthenes' speeches. However, there is no Demosthenic example (παράδειγμα τούτου Δημοσθενικόν) of the fourth degree of metaphors because it is only found in the writings of the 'counterfeit sophists' (ὑποξύλοις τουτοισὶ σοφισταῖς) which they draw from tragedies and Pindar.[37] A Gorgianic expression illustrates the sophists' heavy (παχύτησιν) and cold (ψυχρεύονται) metaphors: 'they call "living tombs" the vultures (τάφους τε γὰρ ἐμψύχους τοὺς γῦπας λέγουσιν) that they above all deserve'. This expression is also criticised by the author of *On Sublimity* for its poetic flavour which causes laughter rather than persuasion.[38] Even though the thoughts are appropriately Noble, the presence of poetic words and figures undermines the credibility of the speaker and the persuasiveness of his speech.

The second attack against sophists is found in the section on forcefulness (δεινότης). In this section, Hermogenes briefly characterises this *meta-idea*, which consists in the harmonious and apropos mixture of all the other *ideai*. Hermogenes divides Forcefulness into three categories. 1. The speech which is forceful and appears to be so, affecting all the components of the speech (thought, method, etc.). 2. The speech which is forceful but does not appear so. 3. The speech that is not forceful but merely appears to be so, a pure verbal trick. The first two types of forcefulness are exemplified by speeches of Demosthenes.[39] The third kind, the apparent forcefulness, characterises the sophistic discourse, in particular Polus, Menon and Gorgias and 'a great deal of contemporary sophists' (τῶν καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς δὲ οὐκ ὀλίγων).[40] Hermogenes argues that the sophists are not forceful because of three shortcomings. First, they create an untimely discrepancy between thought and

[37] Hermog., *Id.* 248.25–249.12.

[38] [Longinus] 3.1–2. For the comparison between Hermogenes and [Longinus], see Patillon 2012, p. 276, n. 224, who also cites Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.3.1405b5 and Demetrius 116. See, e.g., Norden 1898, p. 384–86 for a possible influence of Gorgianic expressions such as this one in near-contemporary Greek and Latin literature.

[39] On public matters for the first category, on private matters for the second.

[40] Hermog., *Id.* 377.10–378.10.

diction. The diction of the sophists is oftentimes great when it ought not to be, especially with respect to nobility. Secondly, they do not use the right stylistic category at the right time (καιρός) and in the right part of the speech, which makes their oration vain and cold (ὑπόκενον καὶ ψυχρόν).[41] Finally, the third flaw combines the two preceding flaws: even though it is sometimes useful to know how to create a gap between thought and diction, Hermogenes criticizes the sophists' untimely use of this effect, thus causing their speeches to be ineffective.

Finally, negative examples drawn from Isocrates' speeches are used in Hermogenes' discussion of the *idea* of beauty. There, Hermogenes makes a distinction between two sorts of beauty: 1. the *idea* proper, which is achieved with a just proportion of the elements that compose the speech and with harmony, and 2. a stylistic beauty, also called ἐπιμέλεια ('care') that is a form of ornament (κόσμος) superimposed upon the oration.[42] Consequently, it is only found at the level of the diction. The use of beauty is purely motivated by aesthetical concerns.[43] At the outset of the section on stylistic beauty, Hermogenes mentions Isocrates' comments on figures in the *Panathenaicus*, 'parisoses and figures of this kind', that attract the listeners' applause.[44] References to Isocrates will be made in the rest of the Hermogenian overview to illustrate this particular figure of stylistic beauty.[45] Although the best (Demosthenian) speech must be beautiful, the use of beautiful figures must not be too conspicuous. Because Isocrates combines parisoses with homoioteleuta, the aesthetical aim of his speech (ἡ πρὸς κάλλος ἐπιβουλὴ τοῦ λόγου) is too conspicuous.[46] Finally, at the end of the section on parisoses, Hermogenes vehemently attacks Isocrates' love for this figure by contrasting it with Demosthenes' moderation. Consequently, the immoderate use of

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[41] This attack against the sophists' lack of *kairos* may implicitly target Gorgias' work on the subject: see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De comparatione verborum* 12.68.

[42] Hermog., *Id*. 297.26–298.1: οἷον κόσμος τις ἐπικείμενος ἔξωθεν κομμωτικός. See Patillon 1988, p. 239–40 on real beauty, and p. 241–42 on stylistic beauty.

[43] Hermog., *Id*. 300.21–22 for instance.

[44] Hermog., *Id*. 298.1–5, quoting Isoc. 12.2, on which see Patillon 1988, p. 241–42, linking these figures to a Gorgianic tradition.

[45] Hermog., *Id*. 299.9–10.

[46] Hermog., *Id*. 299.27–300.4.

beautiful figures may attenuate the effectiveness of the speech by decreasing its credibility, as one cannot take an orator seriously if he indulges in unnecessary flourish.[47]

To sum up, the sophistic discourse is characterised by Hermogenes as poetical and ludic. It comprises a would-be noble diction, which is in fact too poetical, obscure and heavy. Moreover, the device which consists in creating a discrepancy between thought and diction—for instance, articulating humble thoughts with great diction—is used at random. Finally, the extravagant beauty superimposed onto the speech makes it look like an aesthetical composition. For all these reasons, the sophistic speech lacks credibility, sincerity and persuasiveness. In the first two cases, nobility and forcefulness, Hermogenes contrasts Demosthenes, who makes a moderate use of diction and thoughts, with sophists and Gorgias in particular. In the third example, the debate is articulated around an opposition between Demosthenes and Isocrates, who is in fact an exponent of the Gorgianic tradition.

This characterisation of the sophists' speeches is echoed in the description of the styles of orators associated with sophistic rhetoric at the end of *On Types of Style*. For the purpose of this paper, I restrict my examination to the sophists who appear both in *On Types of Style* and in the *VS*. The lists of Hermogenes and Philostratus contain four identical names: Isocrates, Aeschines, Antiphon and Critias (in this order in Hermogenes' list). Their names do not appear in the same order in Philostratus (Antiphon, Critias, Isocrates, Aeschines). While Philostratus appears to follow a chronological order, the organizing principle of Hermognes' list is the perceived quality of the orators' forcefulness.[48] Demosthenes, the best political orator, is followed by a group of three orators, Lysias, Isaeus and Hyperides.[49] The third position is occupied by the rest of the canon of ten orators plus Critias, including the four orators also mentioned in Philostratus.[50] Hermogenes deals with the style of orators in the part of his list dedicated to political speech (ὁ πολιτικὸς λόγος), divided into two categories. The first

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[47] See Patillon 1988.
[48] See Rutherford 1992, p. 357; Patillon 2012, p. 332, n. 941.
[49] Hermog., *Id*. 394.25–26.
[50] Hermog., *Id*. 397.7–13.

category is dedicated to the best political writer, Demosthenes. In the second category, Hermogenes lists other orators from the classical period.[51] This list includes nine orators of the so-called canon of ten orators and Critias.

According to Hermogenes, Isocrates is characterised chiefly by his care (ἐπιμελείᾳ, κόσμῳ) and his grandeur (μεγέθει).[52] He also expands his thoughts in excess (τοῖς κατ' ἔννοιαν δὲ μάλιστα περιβάλλει). Because of this, he lacks vivacity (γοργότητος δὲ οὐδὲν ὅλως). He is consequently the least persuasive author (ἧττόν ἐστι πιθανός). Furthermore, Isocrates sounds like an old professor.[53] His method is, however, forceful, and his thoughts clear and neat.

Aeschines' style is explicitly labelled sophistic (σοφιστικός)– but still political–by Hermogenes.[54] His sophistic style is a consequence of the abundance of great and beautiful figures. However, Aeschines in fact lacks care (ἀμελέστερος). Because he uses too much ethos and moderation, and although he is vehement and rough, he lacks sincerity and passion (διὰ τὸ μὴ πεποιθότως μηδὲ ἀληθινῶς προφέρεσθαι τὸν λόγον). In other words, he is not persuasive. However, his speeches are both really and apparently forceful.

Hermogenes dedicates the greater part of his account of the style of Antiphon to a philological discussion about the identity of Antiphon of Rhamnus and Antiphon the Sophist.[55] According to Hermogenes, the former has composed public and private orations, while the latter has written *On Concord* and *On Truth*. Antiphon of Rhamnus is political (clear, sincere, ethical and therefore credible), although to a lesser extent than the rest of the orators because he is credited with inventing (εὑρετὴς καὶ ἀρχηγός) the political style. He is moderately great as well as careful and moderately forceful. The other Antiphon, however, is not political at all, but noble and swelled (σεμνὸς δὲ καὶ ὑπέρογκος). He makes unsuccesful attempts at reaching greatness by using asser-

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[51]   Hermog., *Id*. 395.17–403.19.

[52]   Isocrates: Hermog., *Id*. 397.14–398.14; Philostr., *VS* 503–04.

[53]   Hermog., *Id*. 397.25–27: By nature, he lacks sincerity, and makes use of superfluous developments, as though he was exhibiting the thoughts that he had found, while saying nothing useful.

[54]   Aeschines: Hermog., *Id*. 399.4–17; Philostr., *VS* 509–10.

[55]   Antiphon: Hermog., *Id*. 399.18–400.21; Philostr., *VS* 498–500.

tions. He is not obscure since he is not neat when expanding his speech (συγχεῖ τὸν λόγον καὶ ἔστιν ἀσαφής) and makes use of parisoses. For these reasons, he is neither forceful, nor sincere.

According to Hermogenes Critias' style is close to that of Antiphon the Sophist, because he is noble and swelled and speaks in an assertive way (σεμνὸς μὲν παραπλησίως τῷ Ἀντιφῶντι καὶ διηρμένος πρὸς ὄγκον).[56] However, in contrast to Antiphon, he is pure in his diction, and his expansions are great and clear. He is moderately careful, and does not use ornament for its own sake (σαφῆ τὴν ἐπιτήδευσιν ἔχοντι). He is sincere and credible, although he makes a moderate use of ethical categories.

Thus, the vocabulary describing the style of the four orators echoes the criticism directed against sophists in the preceding sections of the treatise and focuses on the following analytical terms: σεμνός / σεμνότης / σεμνολογία, δεινός / δεινότης, ἐπιμελής, and πιθανός. I will now examine the descriptions of the styles of the same sophists in Philostratus' *VS*.

3.2. Rhetorical and Sophistic Nobility

The description of the styles of the four sophists is found in the section of the *VS* dedicated to ancient sophists. This section is arranged in chronological order. Contrary to Hermogenes' didactic work which contains a definition of conceptual tools, the definitions of the stylistic terms used by Philostratus in his *Lives* must be deduced from the context. First of all, contrary to Hermogenes, Philostratus finds Isocrates very persuasive (πειθὼ κατηγορεῖ τοῦ ἀνδρός), because he took care (ἐπεμελήθη) to make use of parisoses, antitheses and homoioteleuta. Philostratus also compares Demosthenes' nobility (σεμνότης) with that of Isocrates. Philostratus puts the emphasis on the divine character (θείως, θεοφορήτῳ ὁρμῇ) of Aeschines' prose, because he introduced improvised speeches in sophistic rhetoric.[57] Moreover, according to Philostratus, Aeschines is clear (σαφηνείας), noble (ἁβρὰ σεμνολογία), and forceful (τὸ ἐπίχαρι σὺν δεινότητι). Philostratus believes the two Antiphons to be the same person

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[56] Critias: Hermog., *Id.* 401.24–402.12; Philostr., *VS* 502–03.
[57] See for instance *VS* 481.

contrary to Hermogenes. Nevertheless, he makes a distinction between judiciary speeches (λόγοι δικανικοί, probably the speeches on murders), and 'sophistic' speeches (*On Concord* is cited). The judiciary speeches are characterised by their forcefulness and their art (ἡ δεινότης καὶ πᾶν τὸ ἐκ τέχνης ἔγκειται), while his sophistic speeches have a noble diction (σεμνή τε ἀπαγγελία), because of his use of poetical words (ἐπηνθισμένη ποιητικοῖς ὀνόμασι). Moreover, Philostratus praises his brilliant maxims (γνωμολογίαι τε λαμπραί). Overall, Philostratus thinks that Antiphon is very persuasive (πιθανώτατος δὲ ὁ Ἀντιφῶν). Finally, Philostratus seems to agree to a large extent with Hermogenes about Critias. However, unlike Hermogenes, he praises Critias' Noble language (σεμνολογῆσαί τε ἱκανώτατος, σεμνολογίαν), which he achieves not through poetical words, but rather through the use of the proper meaning of words (ἐκ τῶν κυριωτάτων συγκειμένην καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσαν). He has a concise style (βραχυλογοῦντα), and does not atticise immoderately. Philostratus praises the manner in which he uses connectives as well as his search for paradoxical effect. In both Hermogenes and Philostratus, the speeches of Critias represent a kind of moderately sophistic oratory.

Philostratus uses the same vocabulary as Hermogenes to describe the style of the sophists: σεμνός / σεμνότης / σεμνολογία, δεινός / δεινότης, ἐπιμελής, and πιθανός. However, these words seem to have not only a slightly different meaning in both works, but also a different value. The word σεμνότης and its cognates occur in several descriptions of the styles of ancient sophists in Philostratus' *VS*. In addition to the word σεμνότης, Philostratus makes use of the noun σεμνολογία, the adjective σεμνός and the verb σεμνολογέω as stylistic tools.[58] The notion first occurs in Gorgias' *Life*. Gorgias is said to have 'added poetic words for the sake of ornament and nobility (ὑπὲρ κόσμου καὶ σεμνότητος)'.[59] The words then occurs in Protagoras' *Life*, in which Philostratus claims that Plato described Protagoras' style as Noble (σεμνῶς). Furthermore, Protagoras was flat because of his nobility (ἐνυπτιάζοντα

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[58] Avotins & Avotins 1978, p. 257.
[59] Philostr., *VS* 492.

τῇ σεμνότητι), and composed speeches that were longer than the right proportion (μακρολογώτερον τοῦ συμμέτρου).[60]

Nobility appears in the description of the styles of other ancient sophists. Antiphon has a noble diction (σεμνή τε ἀπαγγελία) and uses poetical words (ἐπηνθισμένη ποιητικοῖς ὀνόμασι). The verb ἐπανθίζω, meaning 'deck as with flowers', suggests that nobility is an ornament, just as in Gorgias' description. It is also found in the depiction of Critias' style, where Philostratus gives a negative definition of nobility. Critias, contrary to other sophists, does not reach nobility by using poetical (τὰ ἐκ ποιητικῆς ὀνόματα) but plain (ἐκ τῶν κυριωτάτων) words.[61] Noble style is consequently commonly achieved through the use of poetical words and metaphors. Finally, Isocrates' and Demosthenes' nobility are compared by Philostratus in Isocrates' *Life*. Demosthenes' nobility is vivacious (ἐπεστραμμένη), while that of Isocrates is graceful and pleasant (ἁβροτέρα τε καὶ ἡδίων). The word ἁβροτέρα describes Aeschines' nobility. What is more the verb κοσμέω in Philostratus' presentation of Isocrates' nobility links it once again with ornament.

The views of Philostratus and Hermogenes differ about the notion of σεμνότης. In the *VS*, just as in *On Types of Style*, nobility is constructed as the main characteristic of the sophistic discourse: nobility has close ties with beauty, and these two *ideai* together make the speech very persuasive. However, the definition and the perceived value of the concept are modified by Philostratus. While Hermogenes advises against using poetical vocabulary and beautiful figures of speech because they decrease its credibility and effectiveness, Philostratus on the contrary praises the orators' persuasiveness achieved by their use of poetic words characteristic of nobility. In the *VS*, nobility is straightforwardly linked to ornaments. Philostratus' example of Isocrates' nobility, drawn from the *Panegyricus*, makes plain that verbal devices, such as parisoses and homoioteleuta, achieve nobility. Finally, the value attributed to the word 'sophistic' changes: while it is negatively connoted in Hermogenes, Philostratus views it as something positive. Philo-

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[60] Civiletti 2002, p. 398, n. 12 convincingly compares the use of the verb ἐνυπτιάζω to Hermog., *Id.* 315.7, where Hermogenes advises against flatness of speech. Isocrates is criticised in *Id.* 397.22–25 for his absence of Vivacity which contributes to his lack of credibility.

[61] Philostr., *VS* 502.

stratus and Hermogenes thus share the same vocabulary; however, Philostratus changes its meaning so as to fit the sophistic envi-ronement.

The reader of the *Lives* having in mind *idea*-theory treatises cannot but notice the semantic and axiological changes of the def-inition of nobility and related stylistic terms. Philostratus appears to have simply changed the denotation and connotation of the stylistic vocabulary in order to suit the type of rhetoric which he documents. Yet, Philostratus does not simply adapts and subverts the stylistic vocabulary and values of technical treatises, but goes so far as to reshape the rhetorical history. In what follows, I will examine the *syncrisis* between Demosthenes' and Isocrates' styles in Isocrates' *Life*. I will argue that Philostratus subverts rhetorical *exempla* in order to present Demosthenes—the paradigm of tra-ditional rhetorical oratory—as a by-product of sophistic oratory.

3.3. Demosthenes' Sophistry. The *exemplum* of Isocrates

I have discussed above Hermogenes' negative description of Iso-crates' style. According to Hermogenes, Isocrates is not persuasive because of the accumulation of unnecessary thoughts, the exces-sive presence of care and beauty, and the lack of sincerity, ethos and vivacity. What is more, Hermogenes illustrates ornamental beauty with examples from Isocrates' speeches. In both cases, the style of Isocrates is contrasted with that of Demosthenes. Philo-stratus confronts both orators in the *Life* of Isocrates to illustate their differences with regard to Nobility:

> In this respect, he prepared in some way the eloquence of Demosthenes (ἡτοίμασέ που καὶ τὴν Δημοσθένους γλῶτταν). For though Demosthenes was a pupil of Isaeus, it was on Iso-crates that he modelled himself (ζηλωτὴς δὲ Ἰσοκράτους), but he surpassed him in tone and impetuosity, in Expansion, and in rapidity both of speech and thought (θυμῷ καὶ ἐπιφορᾷ καὶ περιβολῇ καὶ ταχυτῆτι λόγου τε καὶ ἐννοίας). Again, the Nobil-ity of Demosthenes is more vivacious (ἐπεστραμμένη), while in Isocrates it is more graceful and pleasant (ἀβροτέρα τε καὶ ἡδίων). Let me give an example (παράδειγμα δὲ ποιώμεθα) of the Nobility of Demosthenes: 'For every man death is the goal of life, though he keeps himself cloistered in his cham-ber; but it behoves the brave to set their hands to every noble enterprise, bearing before them the buckler of hope, and to

endure gallantly whatever fate God may allot' [D. 18.97]. With Isocrates on the other hand, the grand style is ornate (κεκόσμηται) as follows: 'All the world which lies beneath the firmament being divided into two parts, the one called Asia, the other Europe, he has taken half of it by the Treaty, as if he were apportioning the earth with Zeus' [Isoc. 4.179].[62]

Contrary to Hermogenes, Philostratus does not set Isocrates against Demosthenes. While Hermogenes centred his *syncrisis* on the oppositions between the two orators, Philostratus focuses on complementarities, as the use of comparatives to qualify both styles indicates: Demosthenes, according to Philostratus, has a more vivacious (ἐπεστραμμένη μᾶλλον) nobility, while Isocrates' is more graceful (ἁβροτέρα), pleasant (ἡδίων), and ornate (κεκόσμηται). He then gives an example of both without revealing which of the two orators he favours. Furthermore, Philostratus mentions Demosthenes' pedigree.[63] According to Philostratus, Isocrates had a much more important impact on Demosthenes' style than his actual teacher Isaeus. Philostratus even suggests an intellectual genealogy between the two: Demosthenes is an updated version of Isocrates whom he surpassed (ὑπερεβάλετο). In other words, Demosthenes becomes a by-product of sophistic rhetoric.[64]

Moreover, the passage appears to mimic the tone of rhetorical treatises. First, Philostratus describes the style of both Demosthenes and Isocrates, with an emphasis on the former's rapidity and vivacity.[65] Subsequently Philostratus gives a practical example (παράδειγμα) of both orators' nobility. The didactic tone is enhanced by the metadiscursive character of the verb used in this sentence, ποιώμεθα. Such a tone is quite unique in the *VS*.

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[62] Philostr., *VS* 503–04. For the quotation of Demosthenes and Isocrates, I have respectively used the translation of Vince 1926 and Norlin 1928.

[63] For Philostratus, the relationship between master and pupil is an important element in the characterisation of the sophist: Andurand 2015.

[64] That Demosthenes is the pupil of Isocrates is not corroborated: see, e.g., Plutarch, *Dem.* 848; Demosthenes is credited with a certain admiration and a study of Isocrates' orations. See further references in Civiletti 2002, p. 417, n. 7.

[65] One of the criticisms of Hermogenes against Isocrates' style is his flatness that makes him resemble an old professor: see above in this paper on Protagoras and Hermog., *Id.* 397.22–25.

There are many passages where Philostratus provides his reader with either a description of the style of a sophist, an example, or both. However, the word παράδειγμα rarely appears in Philostratus' *Lives*: in addition to this passage, there are two other occurrences of the word in the whole work. Both are found in the life of Marcus of Byzantium, but in two different contexts.[66] In the first instance, quite like in Demosthenes' case, the style of Marcus of Byzantium is described and then exemplified with a passage drawn from one of his speeches. In the other occurrence of the word, the meaning of παράδειγμα is slightly different, in that it designates the *comparans* in a simile: Marcus is said to have likened the style of a speech to a rainbow (παράδειγμα τοῦ λόγου τὴν ἶριν ἐποιήσατο). In addition, the example with which Philostratus illustrates Demosthenes' Nobility originates from rhetorical treatises. As Wright and Civiletti point out, this is a 'favourite passage with the rhetoricians'. It is found in Hermogenes' *On Types of Style*, where it illustrates both the thought and diction of Nobility, and in Pseudo-Lucian's *Encomium of Demosthenes*.[67] This passage of *On the Crown* also appears in Pseudo-Aelius Aristides' *Ars I*. In Pseudo-Aristides, it illustrates the thoughts of nobility:

> And the following is also part of nobility: when you examine life and death, for instance: 'For every man death is the goal of life' [D. 18.97], or when you define and distinguish between races and natures, such as: 'Men are not our friends and our foes by natural generation' [D. 23.56].[68]

Philostratus' illustration of Demosthenes' nobility is in fact a trite example of the thoughts and diction of this *idea* in rhetorical treatises. This example is representative of the whole tradition which depicts Demosthenes as the paradigm of nobility. In this respect, Philostratus' insistence on establishing a genealogy between

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[66] Philostr., *VS* 528.

[67] Wright 1921, p. 53, n. 1 refers to Hermog., *Id.* 249.1 and [Lucian], *Dem. Enc.* 5; Civiletti 2002 p. 418, n. 11 adds Menander Rhetor 3.414.4–5 Spengel. Hermog., *Id.* 245.14–15 for the thought; in *Id.* 248.9–16, the merits of the metaphor 'bearing before them the buckler of hope' are discussed.

[68] [Aristides] *Ars rhetorica* 1.4–5. I follow the edition and interpretation of Patillon 2002 for the last sentence of the passage. Menander Rhetor 3.414.4–5 Spengel on the contrary advises to 'philosophise' (φιλοσοφῆσαι) in consolatory speeches and cites this sentence as an example.

Demosthenes and Isocrates—he is an admirer (ζηλωτής) of Isocrates who prepared Demosthenes' language (ἡτοίμασέ που καὶ τὴν Δημοσθένους γλῶτταν)—means that Philostratus turns Demosthenes, and by extension the whole rhetorical tradition, into a by-product of the sophistic environment. This is not the first case of manipulation of a discipline's history in the *VS*. For instance, instead of featuring sophists that are philosophers, Philostratus displays philosophers that are styled sophists.[69] Thus, it seems quite probable that in this passage, Philostratus manipulates the history of rhetoric in order to incorporate Demosthenes, the paradigm of the orator in Antiquity, into the history of sophistic rhetoric.

3.4. The Canon of First Sophists

In my exploration of the relationship between rhetorical treatises—and in particular Hermogenes' *On Types of Style*—and Philostratus' *VS*, I have discussed how Philostratus resemantizes vocabulary and subtly appropriates the didactic tone of rhetorical treatises in order to subvert the hierarchy between traditional rhetoric and sophistic rhetoric. In this part of my paper, I argue that Philostratus constructs a canon of ancient sophists which adapts and subverts the codes of the canon of ten Attic orators found in rhetorical treatises and first attested in Hermogenes' *On Types of Style*.[70] This supports my argument that Philostratus partly relied on rhetorical treatises, among which Hermogenes' treatises, in the construction of his section on ancient sophists.

An analysis of the structure of the *VS* supports the notion that the section on ancient sophists should be conceived of as a canon. The convoluted structure of the beginning of the work has puzzled modern commentators. The *VS* is divided into three categories: the *philosophosophists*, the ancient sophists, and the *deuterosophists*.[71] The work begins with a preface to Gordian (*VS* 479–80) which introduces the differences between Ancient and Second Sophis-

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[69] E.g., Côté 2006.

[70] For the word 'canon' applied in its modern sense to ancient literature, see, e.g., Worthington 1994, n. 1 & p. 247.

[71] For the preface, see, e.g., Côté 2006, p. 27–29.

tic oratory.[72] However, Philostratus rejects the section on second sophists after the sections on *philosophosophists* (*VS* 480–92), and on the ten sophists of the Ancient Sophistic (*VS* 492–510). In the latter section, Philostratus lists in a roughly chronological order sophists who were active in Athens. Gorgias, being the founder of the Ancient Sophistic, is the first member of the list. The list ends with Aeschines who belongs to the group of ancient sophists but is also the first member of the Second Sophistic. In between these two individuals, eight other sophists are named. After Aeschines' *Life*, Philostratus finally gets to the core of his subject-matter: modern-day sophists: he sets out to recount the life of Nicetes of Smyrna, a sophist who worked under Nero. Yet, this creates a gap of 350 years or so between the founder of the Second Sophistic and its second exponent.

As a result of this structural set-up, the section on ancient sophists is carefully isolated from the rest of the *Lives* by both chronological and categorial boundaries. The type of activity which the characters practice motivates the separation of this section from that on *philosophists*, while the temporal gap between Aeschines and his first follower, Nicetes, creates a temporal distance between the two sections. The categorial boundary is easily accounted for; the chronological gap, however, has puzzled modern commentators. As scholars have pointed out, the temporal gap isolates the ancient sophists from the *deuterosophist*; in addition, the textual juxtaposition of the two sections invites readers to compare and contrast them.[73]

These orators are separated from other sophists by temporal, categorial and textual boundaries. Their style of oratory is most of

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[72] On the preface, see, e.g., Côté 2006.

[73] This gap has baffled modern critics, as Mestre & Gomez 1998, p. 337 underline. According to Kayser 1871, p. ix it is a lacuna, but this view is generally dismissed by later commentators; others, such as Brunt 1994, p. 33, have considered that it reflects Philostratus' lack of written sources on Hellenistic writers. In Brunt's view, Philostratus mostly relies on oral accounts and does not possess written speeches of Hellenistic writers. Nicetes would be the 'upper limit for recollection'. Swain 1991, p. 151–52 however argues that stories on Hellenistic orators must have circulated in a school context and concludes that this ellipse must be a deliberate choice of Philostratus. With this ellipse, Philostratus bridges two eras and connects more closely near-contemporary orators to their counterparts from classical Athens: Côté 2006, p. 11–14; Kemezis 2014, p. 201–03, while giving a 'respectable, classical origin' to sophistic rhetoric: Miles 2018, p. 275–76.

the time described at length, and seems to hold sway on that of the *deuterosophists*.[74] Because it provides an authoritative list of models who ought to be imitated, this section bears all the hallmarks of a canon.

Other elements support this interpretation. Philostratus and his audience were most certainly aware of the existence of an authoritative list of ten orators as an anecdote in Herodes Atticus' *Life* indicates. To 'all Greece' calling him 'one of the Ten', Herodes modestly answers that 'at any rate, [he is] better than Andocides'.[75] The expression 'the Ten' (τῶν δέκα) undoubtedly refers to the canon of orators, as the mention of Andocides indicates.[76] The first testimonies of such a list date from the second century, well before the dates of composition of the *Lives* (between 220 and 230). They are found in two lexicographers, Valerius Harpocration and Pollux, and later in Hermogenes' *On Types of Style*.[77] The origin of such a list is debated. Some scholars believe that it could be attributed to Caecilius of Calacte, or to an Hellenistic writer such as Aristophanes of Byzantium, Aristarchus or Apollodorus of Pergamum.[78] However, other scholars believe that the list was drawn up in the second century AD.[79] Notwithstanding, a canon

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[74] Miles 2018, p. 124 for instance points out the 'paradigmatic function' of Gorgias, and later p. 125–26 rightly suggests that the style of Aeschines, the founder of the Second Sophistic, is important for the rest of the work. Noël 2000, p. 204–07 points out Philostratus' mimetic description of the styles of the sophists.

[75] *VS* 564–65.

[76] Rohde 1914³, p. 350, n. 2 singles out two other passages in the *VS* which he believes testify to a knowledge of such a list: *VS* 521 and 539.

[77] This Valerius Harpocration should not be confused with Aelius Harpocration, a writer on *idea*-theory from the same period; see *Suda* α 4013 and 4014 Adler; Patillon 2002, II, p. 17 on Aelius Harpocration and n. 33. On Valerius Harpocration, see Keaney 1991, p. ix–xi. The canon is alluded to in the title of his book, *Lexicon to the 10 Orators*. We know that Philostratus was aware of Pollux's work thanks to the *Life* dedicated to him in *VS* 592–93, although he never mentions his *Onomasticon*. Smith 1995, p. 79 contains a list of works from the second and third centuries mentioning the canon.

[78] See Smith 1995.

[79] The different views are listed in Smith 1995, p. 66, n. 1. Arguments in favour of Alexandrian times: Smith 1995; of Caecilius: Worthington 1994; of the second century: Douglas 1956. In view of the evidence, it is likely that the canon of the ten Attic orators first came into shape at the beginning of the first century, under the pen of an Augustan author. Whatever its origin, it is notewor-

of ten orators appears to have circulated by the time of the composition of the *VS*.

Another element of interest for our purpose is Herodes' comparison to Andocides. This comparison suggests that Andocides's place is at the bottom of the list of the Ten Attic Orators: the μέν *solitarium* after the name Andocides in Herodes' witty reply is restrictive, and should be translated in English by 'at least'.[80] We do not know in which order and following which principle the *archetype* of the canon was organised, if such an authoritative list ever existed and was unanimously accepted. It is however possible that different lists had different orders.[81] In order for the *bon mot* to produce the right effect, there must have been a shared acceptance that Andocides was (one of) the worst orators of the Ten. Evidence suggest that he was not held in high esteem in Antiquity.[82] In Hermogenes' list, arranged from the best to the worse orator in respect to *deinotēs*, Andocides comes last.[83]

All these elements lead me to believe that the structure of the section on ancient sophists advertises itself as a reply to the canon of the ten orators.[84] In what precedes, I demonstrated that Philostratus consciously alludes to rhetorical treatises in his section on ancient sophists, whose content he playfully subverts. Not only does he give a new meaning and a new importance to rhetorical terms, but he also integrates Demosthenes, the paradigm of the rhetorical discourse, within the sophistic tradition, thus setting an anti-history of rhetoric. The same effect is produced with his anti-canon of sophists.

What about Hermogenes? Given that the canon of ten orators is not restricted to Hermogenes, Philostratus' game need not

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thy that the canon already has a long tradition by the time Philostratus composed the *Lives*, and is intensely discussed in the second and third centuries.

[80] Philostr., *VS* 565: Ἀνδοκίδου μὲν' ἔφη 'βελτίων εἰμί'. Rutherford 1992, p. 357 gives a similar interpretation of this passage.

[81] Worthington 1994, p. 244.

[82] Rutherford 1992, p. 357 citing Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.10.21.

[83] Hermog., *Id.* 403.3–12; see Rutherford 1992, p. 357; Patillon 2012, p. 332, n. 941.

[84] I believe however that the canon is only one model among several archetypes: Noël 2000, p. 197–99 argues that Philostratus has a similar attitude towards 'the technique of the *lives* of the grammarians'.

indicate a knowledge of Hermogenes' list specifically. Similarly, the *syncrisis* between Isocrates and Demosthenes may respond to Hermogenes' description of Isocrates' style, but it may well be a traditional confrontation in and outside rhetorical treatises. Therefore, Hermogenes should rather be regarded as one player in the construction of a *technical* and *traditional* rhetorical tradition to which Philostratus alludes. The reader may recognise allusions to his treatises, which include vehement and stern attacks against ancient and contemporary sophists. Nevertheless, the presence of Hermogenes later in the *Lives* confirms that he is, at the very least, regarded as a particularly important piece of the puzzle constructed by Philostratus.

4. *The 'Life' of Hermogenes and the Early Reception of 'On Types of Style'*

As I reach the end of this paper, I would like to briefly come back to the content of Hermogenes' *Life* with new possible interpretations. Philostratus' rejection of traditional rhetoric may account for Hermogenes' negative presentation in the *VS*. Hermogenes, being a rhetorician slandering ancient and modern sophists, is an ideal target for a literary polemic. In addition, the dramatization of his meeting with the emperor incorporates Hermogenes, a traditional rhetorician, into the history of sophistic rhetoric. This is in line with the game with rhetorical treatises which I have identified in this article.

However, besides the purely literary games, I believe that Philostratus makes a more important statement. I have discussed how Hermogenes scorns the sophistic style—in particular, the use of parisoses and poetical effects—because of its perceived persuasive weakness, jeering at contemporary practitioners of this style. Yet, Philostratus here suggests that it is precisely the poetic style of young Hermogenes which brought him fame, respect and the opportunity to declaim in front of the Roman emperor. If we interpret the mysterious disease which he caught as a metaphor for the decision to move from declamation to treatise-writing, then Philostratus may suggest that the type of rhetoric which old-Hermogenes brings him no fame—worse, he is jeered at by other sophists.

Furthermore, in view of my tentative reconstruction of Philostratus' and Hermogenes' network, Philostratus may want to advertise the hypocrisy of Hermogenes in order to promote his own circle. Philostratus displays Hermogenes failing to apply his own precepts. The last word of the *Life*, *technē*, on which the emphasis is put, is also a word used to designate rhetorical treatises. Philostratus, I suggest, wants his reader to believe that the only *technē* worth recording are Hermogenes' grotesque declaiming skills and not his theoretical works. Philostratus' *Life* of Hermogenes can be read as an attempt to slyly disparage Hermogenes by representing him as practicing himself a style which he slanders in his treatises, thereby reducing his intellectual heritage to naught.

Finally, the line of reasoning which I have followed in this talk has implications for our understanding of the early reception of Hermogenes. The existence of commentaries as early as the third century suggest a rapid diffusion of Hermogenes' first treatise *On Issues*.[85] The near-contemporary reception of his second treatise known to us, *On Types of Style*, is however less clear.[86] It is advertised in *On Issues*.[87] If the treatise itself was not written yet, readers were at the very least aware that it would be published. The discussion above appears to suggest that the *Life* of Hermogenes would be informed by the reception of Hermogenes' work on *idea*-theory, and could testify to a negative reception of his works at least in certain circles.

5. *Conclusion*

Although Philostratus does not appear at first glance to be interested in theory, his work still covertly situates its own project in relation to rhetorical treatises in the important section on ancient sophists. This is enacted through first a semantic and axiological modification of key-terms used in stylistic theory, and secondly, by typifying the rhetorical discourse and assimilating it to the figure of Demosthenes; this leads to a reconfiguration of the history of rhetoric, and to its incorporation into sophistic rhetoric.

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[85] Patillon 2012, p. viii.

[86] The alleged reason is the complexity of the system: e.g., Heath 2004, p. 48, although the exact causes are unclear.

[87] Hermog., *Stat*. 34.16–35.14.

Finally, Philostratus presents an alternative, sophistic version of the canon of the ten Attic orators by adopting its structural and formal characteristics. Readers of Philostratus may have in mind Hermogenes' treatise when reading Philostratus' subversive list. Hermogenes' *life* in the *VS*, by exhibiting his extravagant style and by exposing him as an object of laughter, may slyly answer the rhetorician's attacks against sophists and be intended to disparage a perceived threat against Philostratus' circle.

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Abstract

The inclusion of Hermogenes (*c.* 160–230?), a writer of rhetorical treatises on issues and on *ideai*, in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* (written *c.* 220–30) is problematic. The rhetorician is not connected to other sophists treated by Philostratus and the way he is presented,

a talented young man who dashes everyone's expectations, raises questions. I make the hypothesis that his inclusion in the *Lives* is informed by theoretical debates. This paper explores this idea first by examining possible interactions between (relatives of) sophists found in Philostratus and Hermogenes, and secondly comparing Hermogenes' reading list at the end of his treatise *On Types of Style* with the list of ten ancient sophists in Philostratus' work. The confrontation between the two lists shows that Philostratus situates his project in relation to rhetorical treatises, and thus in part against Hermogenes. He does so by changing the axiological and semantic value of key stylistic terms, by presenting Demosthenes as the paradigm of rhetorical norm and a by-product of the sophistic tradition, and by adopting the structure of the canon of ten Attic orators. Secondly, Hermogenes seems to have engaged in polemics against rhetoricians closely associated with members of Philostratus' circle. This may have prompted Philostratus to disparage a threatening rival. I conclude that the *Life* of Hermogenes may provide us with clues about the early reception of the rhetorician's works in Antiquity.

HAN BALTUSSEN

POLEMIC, PERSONALITY AND THE IAMBLICHAN CIRCLE IN EUNAPIUS' *LIVES OF PHILOSOPHERS AND SOPHISTS (VPS)**

1. *Preface*

The relationship between Christians and Hellenes[1] in the fourth century AD is a complex matter which has received much attention and revisionist treatment in recent decades. The clash of these 'religious ideologies' very much set the tone of philosophical and religious debates for this period, especially because Christianity was clearly winning ground in the social and political domain. Two crucial steps towards gaining more influence and power were no doubt Constantine's 'conversion' to Christianity in 312 and the Nicene Creed in AD 325. But other factors of consequence began to have an impact at the 'coal face', one of which is especially relevant for the present chapter: the rise of biographical writings as armaments in the polemical stances of both parties.

On the Christian side, Athanasius' *Life of Antony* (*VA*), written around AD 350, became very influential in religious

[1] I use 'Hellenes' and 'pagans' interchangeably, even though I am aware that the term 'pagans' is problematic. I will at times use it as a shorthand equivalent for the traditional non-Christians of this period. In this paper, it mostly refers to the Platonists of the third and fourth centuries.

communities of monks, its target audience.[2] Not only did this work define the ideal modest lifestyle of a Christian, but it also spawned an increase in biographical writings as the instruments of advertising and reinforcing the Christian lifestyle. According to Gregg, its 'literary form' mimicked the 'pagans' lives of their heroes' and 'inaugurated the genre and [...] frame of Christian hagiography'.[3]

Reactions on the pagan side took various forms. One little-known Greek author among the Hellenes seems to have taken special umbrage to the encroachment of Christians on pagan territory: writing in the 390s in his place of birth, Eunapius of Sardis (*c.* 346–*c.* AD 414) had been deeply disappointed when emperor Julian (the 'Apostate') in the early 360s had attempted (but failed) to revive Hellenic religious practices and halt the Christian advance. His dismay over the growing presence of Christianity is reflected in comments of his *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* and in fragments of his other major work, his *Historical Chronicle*, an account of the late third and fourth centuries.[4] In the *Lives*, a unique account of the Platonist philosophers and orators, Eunapius attempts to resurrect and preserve the proud tradition of pagan holy men in the form of *bioi*. Although we often see the translation 'biographies' for *bioi*, I prefer the translation 'lives', because even a cursory look at these very selective and sometimes incoherent biographical sketches makes clear that Eunapius' *bioi* are not biographies in the standard or strict sense, since they do not offer a descriptive account of an individual from birth to death.[5]

In this paper I will argue that these *bioi* can be seen as a counter-narrative to Christian *bioi*. To support this line of interpretation, I will aim to show that they constitute a subtle act of shadowboxing, an attempt to offer the biographical sketches as exemplars for

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[2] '[...] quickly became the paradigm for the genre of Christian hagiography' (Gregg 1980, p. xiv). On his involvement in polemic, see Greenwood 2018. See Baltussen 2007 for polemics in the earlier tradition.

[3] Gregg 1980, p. xiii.

[4] Fragments collected in Blockley 1981.

[5] Cf. Penella 1990, p. 123: 'Eunapius writes here in his typically selective and telescoped manner'.

the traditional Hellenic *way of life*.[6] It is my contention that the interpretations in recent scholarship have not gone far enough in uncovering the polemical agenda underlying Eunapius' *Lives*.[7] While many interpreters acknowledge a certain antagonistic tone (based on several explicit attacks on Christians), it has not been appreciated fully how Eunapius has gone out of his way to build up a dossier which as a historical construct excels in selecting and manipulating the activities of these 'distinguished men' to good effect.[8] Much of this approach is implicit (hence my use of 'shadowboxing'). I therefore will suggest that the work is *explicitly* 'hagiographic', but *implicitly* polemical. I will say more about the term 'hagiographic' in a moment. The polemical agenda (I argue) is also closely linked to the personalities and various intellectual pedigrees he describes. In fact, the work describes three communities of outstanding pagan individuals and, as Ed Watts has argued persuasively, it is hardly accidental that Eunapius himself is linked to all three.[9] Seen in this light, it can be argued that the work not only offers a counter-narrative against the Christian saints' lives, but also aims to bolster the significance of his own communities.[10]

[6] For *bios* as 'way of life', see now esp. Verhasselt 2016. Wright at one point translates βιοί as 'records-of-their-lives' (p. 349) but usually refers to them as biography, as do Becker 2013 and Goulet 2014 (with qualifications).

[7] The most recent scholars to discuss the competitive aspect of this period are Cox Miller 2000 and Urbano 2013. Urbano rightly seeks to soften the view that there is a 'great divide' between Christians and pagans (p. 3). But his surprise at discovering that Christian monks were referred to as 'philosophers' by Theodoret (l. c.) does not consider the evidence for the semantic shift that the word *philosophia* underwent in the third century AD, as illustrated by an anonymous text cited in MacMullen 1997, p. 85: '[Every student ought to pursue] that uncomplicated love for philosophy (φιλοσοφία) which lies solely *in knowing God through continual contemplation and holy piety*. For many confuse philosophy by the complexity of their reasoning [...] by combining it with various incomprehensible intellectual disciplines through their over-subtle reasoning'; cf. PCairo Maspero 67295, i.15, and Syrianus, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 81.9.

[8] He labels them τῶν σπουδαίων ἀνδρῶν or φιλοσόφους ἀρίστους (*VPS* § 453 = p. 1.9 and 15 Gi.). I add the more precise pagination and line numbers from Giangrande 1956 (abbreviated as Gi.), the best edition until Goulet 2014 was published. Goulet has made several small corrections to the text (noted when appropriate).

[9] While Watts 2005 makes a strong case for the 'intellectual heritage' in the text, his argument is not completely successful (some loose ends are explained away). See also Figures 2 and 3 below.

[10] Watts 2005.

As we will see, Eunapius reserves a special place for the Iamblichan circle of philosophers, revealing how he sees himself as standing at the intersection of several important pagan networks, which he presents as worthy rivals to the Christian saints.

I will start with some brief comments on the general nature and structure of the work, after which I will put forward my arguments as to how one underlying strand of his approach is strongly inflected by his own frustration and unease regarding Christianity, like many other well-educated pagans of his day. The chapter aligns most closely with the volume's theme of 'Polemic, Rivalry and Networking' based on its connection between *polemic* and *personalities*. Eunapius wants us to see that these networks of accomplished pagan holy men present us with worthy equals to the Christian ascetics and miracle workers.

A note of caution on vocabulary is in order. It is far from easy to offer a balanced account of this antagonistic relation between Hellenism and Christianity because our modern discourse and terminology for this period is ultimately the result of the victors in the West, that is, it is steeped in Christianised vocabulary. For instance, while some have referred to Eunapius' individuals as 'pagan saints', Peter Brown's phrase 'holy men' has been adopted as the more acceptable compromise.[11] Closely connected terms such as religion and philosophy also carry misleading associations, since for this period these domains of intellectual and spiritual pursuit were almost indistinguishable. In other words, the philosophers in Eunapius are just as easily labelled 'religious men' who exhibit a special relationship with the divine (the two domains overlap in a focus on virtue); in short, even if we want to do justice to the descriptions of these pagan lives, we would do well to avoid slipping into terminology that is tainted with Christian associations.[12]

[11] Brown 1971. Cf. Fowden 1982.

[12] Other terms which I will use in a qualified sense are saints, hagiography, and miracle. Addey (2014, esp. ch. 3–4) makes a strong case for the fact that Platonism is a religion. For a sensible proposal on how to redefine the discourse between Christians and non-Christians see van Uytfanghe 1993.

2. *The Nature and Structure of 'VPS'*

Starting with the structure of the work will set us up conveniently for thinking about the author's purpose of writing the lives. Both the structure and purpose of Eunapius' work are in fact still debated. It is possible that Eunapius chose for the structure and format of lives (and not a historical overview) because he used a variety of sources, which may also have functioned as models (see below). Writing around AD 392 in Sardis, Eunapius had direct access to earlier biographical writings (he mentions Plutarch and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,[13] Sotion and Porphyry) and of course he is witness to certain events of his own time (he overlaps a few years with Julian and includes information on his own teachers). Thus the structure of the work is not singularly determined by one idea, but by several: familiarity, chronology, professional links, and personal preferences all play a role in his selection of individuals, their actions and events.

More problematic is the specific purpose of Eunapius' *bioi*. Although several suggestions have been made, the debate among scholars has not yet subsided. The favoured options are the following four: (i) a history of Neoplatonism,[14] (ii) a 'hagiography' of pagan sages,[15] (iii) an *apologia* for the pagan life style,[16] or (iv) a personal account of Eunapius' intellectual heritage.[17] All four ring true in some way: Eunapius is also known as historian and the lives follow a rough chronological order; his unmitigated admiration for many of the individuals described comes across as idolisation; the emphasis on the *way of life* represents a sincere focal point, as is clear from the opening page which mentions lives, moral virtues and τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα; and lastly, Eunapius places himself squarely within the narrative by invoking links to many figures and as having witnessed many of the events. But nothing is simple in the case of Eunapius' account of these 29 individuals. For one thing, he

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[13] Eunapius criticises the title of the book, offering as alternative 'The visit of a god to mankind' (*VPS* § 454 = p. 3.9 Gi.). Buck also notes the 'models' for Eunapius in his opening pages (1992, p. 141–42); cf. Urbano 2013, p. 84 n.

[14] Penella 1990.

[15] Becker 2013. Cf. Clarke 2000.

[16] Buck 1992.

[17] Watts 2005.

does not just list these brief lives, but emphasises very particular elements in their lives and actions, claims special links between teachers & students (sometimes parent & child), and betrays a preference for the Iamblichan lineage. The following table (Fig. 1) briefly indicates what I mean (selective list):

Plotinus	Julian of Cappadocia
↳ Porphyry	↳ Prohaeresius (sophist; teacher of Eunapius)
↳ Iamblichus	& his rival sophists:
↳ Alypius	Epiphanius
↳ Aedesius the Cappadocian	Diophantus
↳ Sopater	Sopolis
Aedesius	
↳ Eustathius (marries Sosipatra)	Chrysanthius (teacher of Eunapius)
↳ Antoninus, their son and holy man	
↳ Maximus, and his two accomplished	
brothers, Claudianus & Numidianus	
↳ Julian (future emperor)	
↳ Chrysanthius of Sardis	
↳ Priscus the Thesprotian or Molossian	

Fig. 1
Lineages and teacher-student connections

One reason that the purpose is not easily determined is that Eunapius leaves us guessing as to *how exactly* his broad aim fits the actual lives. When he states his purpose in the introduction, he says:

> My account, however, does not aim to record the lesser activities (τὰ πάρεργα) of distinguished men, but only their significant actions (τὰ ἔργα)[18] [...] after expending much thought and pains so that the result might be a continuous and definite account (συνεχῆ καὶ περιγεγραμμένην) of the philosophical and rhetorical *life* of the most respectable men ... (*VPS* I.1 & II.10–11 Goulet = §§ 342–43 and 349 Loeb; trans. Wright 1921, modified).[19]

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[18] There are echoes here of Herodotus, *Hist*. 1, 'preface' (great deeds); 1.5 (historicity) and Plutarch, *Alex*. 1, in which these historians open their work by discussing the specific topic and method.

[19] I have included Goulet's section numbers, which will also feature in my new Loeb text. For useful exegesis of the introduction see Hahn 1990. The translations in this paper offer a sneak preview of my new translation.

Upon reading the materials it becomes clear that Eunapius chooses very particular events and activities in their lives. The emphasis is not on standard biographical details, except for the place of origin, but on their virtues and unusual 'special skills', which include, for example, levitating, conjuring up beautiful boys from springs, as in the case of his favourite holy man, Iamblichus. In another, we are told about a very special woman who is trained by men from the east in the Chaldean oracles, philosophy and much more, all of which leads to her becoming not only a most learned person, but also one who seems omniscient, and as her father comments, 'god-like'.

Why this idiosyncratic style of biographical writing? I submit that an explanation for the unusual content of these lives may lie in Eunapius attempting to counter-act the new trend of Christian lives. While this is not the only possible factor driving his writing of the *Lives*—he appeals to pagan sources such as Porphyry and Sotion at the outset, though not Diogenes Laertius (*VPS* § 454)—the wide influence of the *Life of Antony*, written by bishop Athanasius around AD 350, may play a role in steering Eunapius' unusual approach.[20] Athanasius' *Life* contributed to a proliferation of lives with the distinct purpose of advertising the beneficial impact of the Christian faith. Athanasius addresses the work specifically to the communities of monks and Antony clearly is portrayed as having superhuman strength which allows him to be virtuous and resist all kinds of evil and temptation.[21] Eunapius, it seems, offers a pagan alternative, proffering in the pages of his work a set of *bioi* which advertise the special nature

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[20] Cox 1983, p. xiv refers to ancient biography as 'a halfway house between history and rhetoric'. The *Life of Antony* also resembles the encomium (Harmless 2005, section on 'ancient biography'). Urbano 2013, ch. 5 also undertakes a comparison between these authors, but his indiscriminate use of the term 'philosopher' strikes me as unwarranted, because Athanasius is not simply 'recasting the life of the Philosopher' (p. 207), but developing Antony's profile in the light of the new *meaning* of the terms philosophy/philosopher: Christian and pagans compete in practical and moral terms for religious piety (see also my comment on the semantic shift for φιλοσοφία in n. 7 above). In addition, his use of Diogenes Laertius is questionable since Eunapius does not seem to know of his work (he never mentions him, perhaps because the work was not widely available).

[21] His resistance to *daimones* is highlighted at *VA* 37 ('which the Greeks call gods'), and the fact that temptations may also 'appear as phantoms, animals of all monstrous shapes and forms' (*VA* 33). I use the translation of Gregg 1980.

of the Hellenic religious perspective. Eunapius' emphasis on religious qualities of several individuals and their actions is clear, but they gain in meaning and significance if we consider the possibility that they *presuppose* the presence of the lives of Christian 'blessed men' (saints) and react to them.[22] That this period of the intense religious debate added *bioi* to the armaments of polemic is in view of their rivalry a plausible move. As exemplars for appropriate lifestyles, they provided important didactic tools in the battle for the moral high ground, useful vehicles for doctrine as well as concrete examples of how to live one's life. In other words, exemplary lives could reach a wide range of different audiences. This also means, paradoxically, that the texts reflect a clash in ideology, and at the same time, Eunapius' work involves an act of mimesis in genre, which he puts to polemical use as a counter-narrative built on a very similar format as a saint's *bios*.

That the *Life of Antony* could trigger such a reaction can be illustrated with some interesting comments from the work. Firstly (and this should not surprise), the competitive aspect was already present when Athanasius wrote it. He does not just offer a positive articulation of Antony's life and activities. In *Life of Antony* 16–44 Antony famously holds a speech in which he talks to an audience who have come for advice.[23] He advocates a simple life style, one which is full of virtue, but devoid of earthly possessions (*VA* 16 'despise the body and possessions, you can't take them with you'), but is also keen to contrast the life he proposes with that of the Greeks (*VA* 20 'Greeks go abroad for education; we don't need to: virtue is within us'; *VA* 33 'the Greeks were led astray by the oracles'). Athanasius follows this up with his own advice: he encourages them to read out these admonishments to their 'brothers' and even to the pagans (*VA* 94):

> read these things to the other brothers so that they may learn what the life of the monks ought to be [...] If the need arises, *read this to the pagans as well* (τοῖς ἐθνικοῖς ἀνάγνωτε), so they

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[22]   A question I have not yet been able to answer is whether his work stands in *direct* rivalry to Jerome's *On Famous Men*, also written in the 390s. See my comments in the conclusion.

[23]   'One day when he had gone out, all the monks came to him, asking to hear a discourse'.

> may understand by this means that the Lord Jesus Christ is
> God and Son of God—and additionally, that the Christians
> who are sincerely devoted to him and truly believe in him not
> only prove that the demons, whom the Greeks consider gods,
> are not gods [...] (emphasis mine).

These comments suggest that the antagonism and polemic was
already very much present in Athanasius' mind and writing. His
attempt to write a 'manual' for the Christian life for monks by
way of one shining exemplar found a following in many other
lives.[24] Thus Athanasius stands at the beginning of a biographi-
cal trend for the Christians, which harnassed both their faith and
their robustness in the marketplace.[25]

3. *Polemical and 'Hagiographical'?*

Let me now turn to my main argument, which is based on the
suggestion that Eunapius' work is *explicitly 'hagiographic'* in its
reverential tone, *but implicitly polemical* in that its selection of,
and preference for, very limited characteristics suggests a suspi-
cious lack of impartiality. If it were merely a matter of reflecting
the tradition of the *theios anêr*, Eunapius' inclusion of the soph-
ists and medical men would weaken his case. I am aware that fur-
ther argument is required, but it can hardly be denied that he is
often keen to highlight the supernatural powers of his key figures.
A first point to consider briefly is the question of genre alignment.
Does Eunapius declare his hand as to which genre he thinks this
work belongs to, apart from using the term 'lives' in the title?
A few paragraphs into the work he does seem to hint at a certain
connection to existing works (*VPS* II.1–2 Goulet = § 454 Loeb =
p. 3.14–24 Gi.):

> **Porphyry** and **Sotion** compiled a history of philosophy and
> the lives of the philosophers. But Porphyry ended with Plato
> and his times, while Sotion, though he lived before Porphyry,

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[24] Williams 2008 places the heyday of Christian biography in the fourth and
fifth centuries. Cf. next note.

[25] Which is why I disagree with Williams 2008, who prefers to keep the
Christian and non-Christian biographical works separate. One may also ask how
the Gospels feature in this tradition. Cf. Wilcken 1979.

> clearly carried his narrative, as we see, to later times also [i.e. after Plato]. But since the crop of philosophers and sophists who came between Sotion and Porphyry was not described in proper appreciation of the importance and wide-ranging nature of their excellence, **Philostratus** of Lemnos in an improvised and agreeable style spat onto the page the lives of the most distinguished sophists; but no one has recorded accurately the lives of the philosophers [for this period] (trans. Wright 1921, modified).

The names and works mentioned could hint at a genre-choice, but it is also possible to take his comment at the end of the passage, 'what has not been recorded accurately' as defining the scope of the work, since it fills a significant gap in the existing literature.[26] In tone and tendency the work parallels more the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, which he also mentions (see n. 59).

Assuming for the moment that the arrangement into lineages and his exaggerated claims about their deeds can stand as the 'hagiographical' aspect, we can go one step further. Starting from an analogue case concerned with the *Life of Plotinus* written by his student Porphyry we can make a plausible argument for implicit polemics.[27] In his undeservedly neglected article, the French scholar Jephargnon has made an intriguing case as to how the life can be read as a pagan counterexample to Jesus—it is entitled 'The hidden meanings [or subtext] of the *Life of Plotinus*, or the "Gospel" of Plotinus according to Porphyry'.[28] Jephargnon offers a subtle comparison between Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and the Gospels (not in Becker or Goulet).[29] Essentially, he argues that Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* contains a number of subtle coun-

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[26] Buck 1992, p. 141–42 also sees these as models. For Porphyry, see Theodoret *CAG* 2.95, 62.4–7 Raeder.

[27] Urbano 2013 offers a comparison between Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and Eusebius' account of Origen. That emperor Julian also used a subtle approach in polemic against the Christians was recently shown in Greenwood 2014 (Julian as co-opting elements 'from Christian theology to present himself as both a prophetic guide to paganism and a pagan son of god rivalling Christ and Constantine', p. 140), and Greenwood 2017.

[28] The original title reads: 'Les sous-entendus dans la vie de Plotin ou l'évangile de Plotin selon Porphyre'. For some critical remarks on Jephargnon, see next note.

[29] I also build on Buck, Hahn, Becker, and Goulet, but Jerphagnon has not been used to full effect. For criticism of his position, see Cox Miller 2000.

termoves to the Gospels—the first clear hagiographical lives. This means, he argues, that the *Life* is an implicit polar opposite to the account in the Gospels, while presuming these as known. He gives several examples; here are two: (1) Porphyry opens by telling us that 'Plotinus who lived among us, was ashamed to be in a body' (*Plot.* 14.1). The Gospel of John states that in Jesus 'Word became flesh and was among us'. (2) Whilst Jesus' life was anchored in a long genealogy going back in time, Plotinus is presented as never wanting to talk about his ancestors, parents or homeland.[30] These are just the small opening gambits. The continued contrast between Jesus who acted and lived like a mortal (incl. eating, drinking, and sleeping [Matt. 8.24]), and Plotinus who lived on an absolute minimal diet and fasting all the time, draws out a deeper opposition: Plotinus who is shown as hardly eating, drinking, or sleeping, stands for Soul and Spirit, while Jesus becomes the Spirit in the flesh, in matter. Finally, there is the connection to the divine: while Jesus ascends to heaven, Plotinus possesses a constant spiritual link with the Ideal world above (the so-called undescended mind).[31]

With this example in mind, we are now able to identify a similar, but barely concealed parallel to Christian claims about Jesus in Eunapius. In his 'Life of Porphyry' Eunapius tells us about an event during Porphyry's time as a student of Plotinus, which may be based on Porphyry's own *Life of Plotinus*. But what seems to have escaped notice is that the account contains a striking discrepancy when he tells of Porphyry's self-loathing and hunger strike (*VPS* IV.7–8 Goulet = § 456 Loeb = p. 7.17–8.4 Gi.; my emphasis):

> There he lay groaning and starving himself (ἀποκαρτερῶν), and he would take no nourishment [...] But great Plotinus 'kept no vain watch' [*Iliad* 10.515] on these things, and [...] followed in his footsteps [...], and so found him lying there; then *he found abundance of words that recalled to life his soul*, as it was just about to speed forth from the body.[32] Moreover,

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[30] Jerphagnon 1990, p. 43.
[31] Jerphagnon 1990, p. 46–47.
[32] Πλωτῖνος [...] τὸν ἀποπεφευγότα νεανίσκον ἀναζητῶν [...] καὶ λόγων τε πρὸς αὐτὸν ηὐπόρησε τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνακαλουμένων ἄρτι ἐξίπτασθαι.

he gave strength to his body so that it might contain his soul. [...] So Porphyry breathed again and arose [trans. Wright 1921, modified].

There is a strong suggestion that Plotinus has brought Porphyry back from near-death. Note how Plotinus uses *words* to revive his student, annulling, as Eunapius seems to imply, the harmful effect his own teaching had in the first place. In short, Plotinus here becomes a miracle worker much like Jesus in the gospels.[33]

Many scholars attribute this to Eunapius' misreading of Porphyry's life of Plotinus. They note that Porphyry's own version of his suicidal episode[34] does not mention this miraculous rescue. This raises the question where Eunapius found this anecdote, if Porphyry's text was a source for Eunapius—as is usually assumed.[35] Thus in her Loeb translation Wright comments in a footnote 'Eunapius quotes incorrectly the account of this incident given in Porphyry'.[36] This strikes me as a rather naïve comment which assumes a direct and unadulterated dependence on Porphyry. I believe with Buck that it makes more sense to see this as Eunapius' embellishment of the story to good competitive effect, precisely to make Plotinus look like an extraordinary sage who can revive people just like Jesus was said to have done.[37] This implicit style of polemic cannot receive full confirmation, but this is only one of several examples where the presumed carelessness of Eunapius suddenly transforms into a deliberate distortion. Here the lines between fact and fiction become blurred because of his implicit polemical agenda.

Such a subtle case can be backed up by other, more explicit examples. For the sake of brevity, I will just present two cases, one in favour of his heroes, the other against the Christians. His great idol (and student of Porphyry), Iamblichus, is presented as

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[33] I have used this example also in Baltussen 2020 but embedded within a different argument.

[34] Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 11; trans. Armstrong 1969, p. 37.

[35] See, e.g., Watts 2005, p. 434–35.

[36] Trans. Wright 1921, p. 365, n. 3. On 'concocting' details and 'fabrication' in Eunapius see also Buck 1988, p. 40. Fabrication, pseudography and other forms of fraudulent writing were rife in the first three centuries on both sides, see Ehrman 2012 for a comprehensive overview of Christian forgeries.

[37] Buck 1977, p. 135.

a remarkable sage and holy man, who has extraordinary qualities. One passage suggests several 'sure manifestations of his divine nature', when he is described as having a kind of sixth sense, when he senses that a dead body has recently been transported on the road they are about to take during a festive day (*VPS* V.13 Goulet). Another anecdote relates how he shows his students how he can 'conjure up' beautiful young boys (Eros and Anteros) out of two local springs at Gadara (*VPS* § 459). His status as 'miracle worker' is also illustrated by the effect Iamblichus has on his students (*VPS* V.21–22 Goulet [= p. 14.8–9; 15–19 Gi.]):

> [after the first boy] His disciples were overwhelmed with amazement [...] [after the second] He restored them to their proper places and went away after his bath, reverenced by his pupils. After this the crowd of his disciples sought no further evidence but believed everything from the clear perceptual evidence[38] that had been revealed to them and hung on to him as though by an unbreakable chain.

This kind of impact often serves as evidence of the genuine divine features such men possessed according to Eunapius. Strikingly, Eunapius *himself* hardly ever claims that anyone of his heroes and heroines are divine, but any such statement is always channelled via the observers or bystanders. Whether this is a conscious decision or not is difficult to say.

In my second example I focus on Eunapius' annoyance and fear over the rise of Christianity bubbling up to the surface. It leaves little doubt about his disdain and anger over what he regards as a reprehensible *way of life*.[39] He especially targets the monks placed in pagan sacred places (*VPS* VI.112 Goulet = § 472 Loeb = p. 39.13–18 Gi.):

> they imported monks (μοναχούς) as they called them, who were men in appearance, but led the lives of swine, and openly did and allowed countless unspeakable crimes. But this they regarded piety, to show contempt for the divine (trans. Wright 1921, modified).

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[38] The Greek δείγματα means 'samples, patterns' (Wright's 'proofs' is too strong). Cf. σημεῖα, p. 344 L.

[39] I offer a fuller argument in Baltussen 2020.

Regarding the destruction of the great temple in Alexandria, the Serapeion, he rails (*VPS* VI.109 Goulet = § 472 Loeb = p. 38.10–39.2 Gi.):

> they, girding themselves in their wrath, made a raid on the temples, and although they could not allege even a rumour of war to justify them, they demolished the temple of Serapis and made war against the temple offerings, whereby they won a victory without meeting a foe or fighting a battle (trans. mine).[40]

It is clear that even Eunapius has trouble avoiding the language of war here, and given the violent scenes, this is neither surprising nor unwarranted. Because his personal life was upended by the untimely death of his idol and the inescapable progression of a rival religion, he came to describe this conflict as a true battle of his time, a Gigantomachia (*VPS* VI.108 Goulet = § 472 Loeb = p. 38.19 Gi.), but also chooses to emphasise that this so-called victory of Christianity over Hellenic religion was won without foe or fight.

4. *Personalities and Network* [41]

Now that we have discussed the polemical aspect of the work, one last feature of the *Lives* should be dealt with: the personalities and networks. The latter term is of course an anachronism, but, as clarified above, Eunapius sees himself connected to three distinct groups, which one can describe as communities of well-educated Hellenes, unusual individuals versed in three major areas of intellectual competence: philosophy, oratory, and medicine. This aspect will link this chapter more closely to the theme of the present volume. The way in which all these individuals were connected depended very much on shared interests (philosophy), authority (teachers and students), and tradition (Platonism, rhetoric). Watts was the first to exploit this idea of communities with shared values more emphatically.[42] Here I offer some additional

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[40] The final part of this passage offers a nice rhetorical flourish: Τῷ δὲ Σεραπείῳ καταλυμήναντο καὶ τοῖς ἀναθήμασιν ἐπολεμήσαν, <u>ἀνανταγώνιστον καὶ ἄμαχον νίκην νικήσαντες</u>.

[41] This section has benefited greatly from Watts 2005; Urbano 2013; 2018.

[42] Watts 2005.

observations to show how these characteristics go quite some way towards what we consider 'networks' today (see also Fig. 2). In addition, Eunapius claims connections with most of these figures in various ways, establishing an 'intellectual genealogy'.[43]
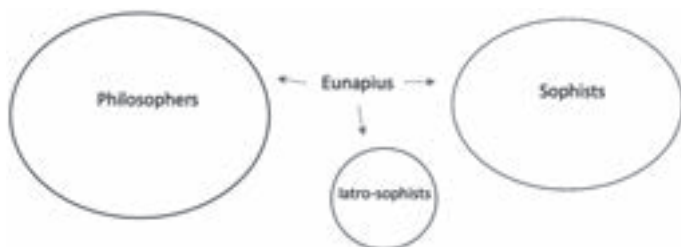
Fig. 2
Eunapius' Affiliations

The number of individuals in the first group (12 philosophers[44]) comprise, as we saw, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus (the first triad of teachers-pupils), their students and some lesser known individuals. Eunapius' name-dropping exercise for this group is based on oral and written reports (see next passage quoted below). Yet his claim to being an insider is somewhat derivative: his connection to Iamblichus runs via his teacher Chrysanthius of Sardis, who was 'a pupil of Aedesius, and Aedesius was one of the leading disciples of Iamblichus, and one of those who spoke to him' (*VPS* § 458; cf. § 500). Eunapius also mentions at the outset that he has tried his best to obtain information through written and oral sources.[45] This passage is worth quoting in full as it gives us some insight into his approach to the work (*VPS* I.3–5 Goulet = § 453 Loeb = p. 1.12–2.10 Gi.):

> The account will unfold for those who wish to read it, not with complete certainty in all respects—for it was not possible to collect all the evidence with accuracy [...] [the author

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[43] Watts 2005, p. 339.

[44] One can debate the exact number: Watts counts 11 philosophers considering Alypius, Epigonus and Beronicianus minor excursions within the lives of others (2005, p. 337 with n.).

[45] He regularly claims he has witnessed certain events himself (e.g., § 483 ὁ συγγρράφευς [...] ἑώρα).

of this work] has read detailed notes, and on account of these—if he misses the truth, he may refer his error to others, like a diligent pupil who has fallen in with inferior teachers; or, if he *does make truthful claims* and [has] as guides those who are worthy of admiration—at least his own work may be untainted and blameless, because he followed those in whose steps it was his duty to follow. Because few, or hardly anyone, have written on these matters, [...] neither that which has been composed by earlier authors will be concealed from my readers, nor what has come down by oral tradition to the present day, but the proper weight will be assigned to both sources, I mean that *nothing from what was written has been altered*, while what depends on oral dissemination [κατ᾽ ἀκοήν] and hence is liable to become disorganised and changeable by the lapse of time, has now been fixed and given stability by being written down (trans. and emphasis mine).[46]

This passage shows how he tried to access information via oral and written traditions. His remark that certain mistakes are the responsibility of his sources sounds a weak excuse for a historian, but at least he strives for a degree of honesty by claiming that he has not changed anything (whether that is true is of course another matter).[47] All this looks like an attempt to gain the trust of his readers. He also tries to associate himself with the individuals he reports on, especially if it involves those who may have had direct contact with these important figures. His own connection to the great Iamblichus stands at three removes, but regarding the penultimate link (Aedesius) he still insists that Aedesius was 'one of those who *spoke* to him'. Direct contact with the great teachers was considered important in the Platonic tradition, because of the notion of the living voice. Plato's famous comments on writing and his dialogues were the clearest signs of this view that the spoken word could not be replaced with the written word in philoso-

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[46] Later he holds back on reporting certain things (*VPS* § 460): 'Even more unusual and portentous things were related of him, but I wrote down none of these, since I thought it a hazardous and sacrilegious thing to introduce a spurious and fluid [oral] tradition into a stable and well-founded [written] narrative'. See also Watts 2005, p. 335.

[47] On the sources see also Watts 2005. For a precedent, see Porphyry, *De philos. ex or.* 109.9ff. Jacobi.

phy.[48] Given that the *Lives* deal foremost with philosophers, that is, sages with special divine qualities, these figures should be taken as the most important component of the work.[49] Oddly Eunapius describes the second and third group as an interruption when he returns to recount Chrysanthius' life (Wright 1921, p. 537; cf. Goulet 2014, t. II, p. 96.8–9).[50]

The primary figure of Julian of Cappadocia stands at the start of the account of orators (*VPS* IX.1–26 Goulet = p. 59.5–63.15 Gi.). Eunapius' link to the sophists (in effect orators of high repute) is in the first instance determined by his status as a student of Prohaeresius.[51] He emphasises personally meeting Maximus (427), and points out that his niece was Chrysanthius' wife (445). His main criterion as stated at the outset is illustrated by showing how each of these men rises in the social or political ranks. But he also regularly indicates how circumstances at court conspire against such high-achievers due to jealousy of other courtiers. While these claims sometimes come across as rather paranoid (or passive aggressive victimisation), historically confirmed events such as murder (Sopater, *VPS* §§ 463–64), torture (Maximus, *VPS* §§ 478–79) or exile (Oribasius, *VPS* §§ 498–99) provide evidence for the embattled position some of these intellectuals had found themselves in under rapidly changing leadership of the empire.

The third and smallest group of so-called iatro-sophists consists of five individuals (trans. Wright 1921, p. 527–39): Zeno of Cyprus (p. 529), and his students, Magnus (p. 531–33),

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[48] 'the author of this narrative did not fail to see the man with his own eyes, but while still a youth met him in his old age and heard his voice, which was such as one might have heard from Homer's Athene or Apollo'. On living voice and oral teaching see Mansfeld 1994; Baltussen 2002.

[49] Watts 2005, p. 337 expresses the same view. This is why the work should *not* be given the title *Lives of the Sophists*, as has been the convention since Wright 1921, e.g., Giangrande 1956 (*Eunapii Vitae Sophistarum*), Buck 1992.

[50] ἐπανιτέον δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς φιλοσόφους πάλιν ὅθεν ἐξέβημεν.

[51] A much-debated problem is that Eunapius does not seem to mind that Prohaeresius was a Christian. I cannot discuss this problem in full here but suggest Eunapius distinguished between the uneducated and unwashed monks in Alexandria he fulminates against (*VPS* §§ 472–73) and a brilliant sophist with special qualities such as Prohaeresius (see *VPS* §§ 484–90). At *VPS* § 493 he seems to allow for some doubt as to P.'s Christian allegiance by his phrasing (ἐδόκει γὰρ εἶναι χριστιανός). In addition, P. treated him like a son (*VPS* § 493).

Oribasius (p. 533ff.), Ionicus (p. 537f.), and Theon (p. 539). A iatrosophist is basically a physician with good rhetorical skills.[52] Eunapius introduces this part of his *Lives* with some brief comments on 'famous physicians' active at 'this time' (close in time to Julian the sophist). Zeno is the fountain head of this group. Described as an autodidact in rhetoric and medicine (*VPS* § 498), he is made responsible for the subsequent generation of skilled orators and physicians, or some who were skilled in both areas (hence: 'iatrosophists'). Eunapius' praises each of them for various skills and achievements, highlighting good upbringing where possible (Ionicus, son of a physician; Oribasius from a good family in Pergamon), and in general indicating their reputation and esteem. His personal links to them depends largely on the claim that he too has medical knowledge (*VPS* § 505). A possible exception to this kind of tenuous link is Oribasius (*c.* 320–AD 403), Julian's court physician. He is reported to have dedicated one of his works to Eunapius, so a close personal relationship can be assumed. The work in question is called *For Eunapius*, a collection of easily procured medicines compiled for the layman. One of his great achievements, Eunapius reports, is that after being banned from the empire by the successors of Julian, Oribasius managed to show his virtue by acquiring a great reputation among the barbarians (παρὰ τοῖς βαρβάροις προσεκυνεῖτο καθάπερ τις θεός) and rising to take a position at the court of their rulers (§§ 498–99). This occasioned his return to the empire, marriage with four children (who are still alive, according to Eunapius). One imagines that the barbarian verdict to regard Oribasius as a god is not quite the same as similar claims about Iamblichus and others, but it does align with Eunapius' attempt to amplify the stature of his subjects. His emphasis on their connection to high office and the courts also strongly resembles the ambition of orators in the Second Sophistic. Thus Eunapius describes the achievements and ambitions in a period which we might label the 'Third Sophistic'.

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[52] The word is not Eunapius' own. Regarding the combination of rhetoric and medicine one is reminded of Plato, *Gorgias* 456b–c where Socrates suggests that Gorgias' brother, a physician, could benefit from Gorgias' oratory in persuading patients regarding their treatments.

5. *Conclusion*

I have argued that the various purposes attributed to Eunapius' work that have found support (history, hagiography, apologia, personal account) did not sufficiently explore its polemical aspect. The significance of polemics and personalities was illustrated by highlighting several factors, most importantly his implicit and explicit polemics, his panegyrical tendencies, and his personal connections to most of the individuals discussed. The work's use of oral and written reports rests in part on Eunapius' personal access to three 'networks' with a particular interest in philosophers and the circle of Iamblichus, with himself situated at the centre of all three (see Fig. 3).
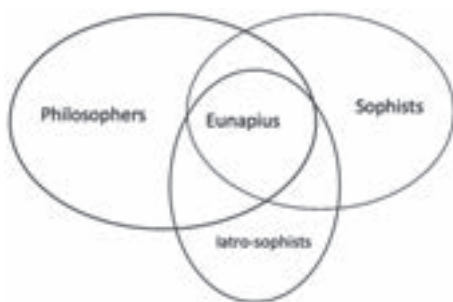
Fig. 3
Eunapius' Pivotal Role in the Narrative

When we examine more closely his accounts of the intellectual circles from Plotinus to Chrysanthius (Eunapius' teacher), we find him focusing on the 'remarkable deeds' (ἔργα) and outstanding moral characteristics rather than writing full biographies. In other words, the work is idiosyncratic and goes to extraordinary lengths to show how remarkable these Hellenic men and two women (Sosipatra; Maximus' wife) were. But it is also clear that, in order to achieve this, Eunapius does not shy away from exaggeration and confabulation.[53]

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[53] On occasion he also mentions negative features, but, more often than not, these are resolved due to the extraordinary qualities of his protagonists.

This act of 'supersizing' these Hellenes I interpret as a polemical strategy, which attempts to galvanise the values and key figures of this (Platonist) community in opposition to, and rivalry with, the Christians.[54] The choice of format, βίοι, could be a first clue for its intended purpose; the emphasis on divine qualities another; the use of exaggeration and confabulation are further signs of how far he was willing to go to his upbeat agenda. It is remarkable that the views of a non-Christian Greek in the eastern part of the empire survive. After all, pagan religious rituals were officially banned by Theodosius in 391 and Platonist teaching by Justinian in 529. Eunapius' *Historical Chronicle*, which is said to have been published in a second edition without the anti-Christian polemic, was still available in the ninth century, when the patriarch Photius would condemn him for his impious views and extravagant adulation of Julian the Apostate.[55]

Admittedly, this set of lives is channelled through the narrow lens of one frustrated pagan intellectual who attempts to transcend this personal misfortune by recording (and thus preserving) an important counterculture, thereby raising the issue to a more generalised level. Writing in the province, does he have a particular audience in mind? We know very little about its distribution or relation with other similar texts. Could the idea for the work be a response to contemporaries like the Christian author, Jerome, who also justified his lives of *Famous Men* from polemical perspective, placing himself in opposition to familiar pagan sources? In the opening paragraph Jerome writes (italics mine):

> But surely when they are distinguished by their writings, they
> will not grieve very greatly over any loss in our non-mention
> of them. Let *Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian* learn, rabid dogs as
> they are against Christ (*rabidi aduersus Christum canes*), let
> their followers, they who think the Church has had no phi-
> losophers or orators or men of learning, learn how many and

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[54] Becker 2016 tries to argue this by using the *scala uirtutum* (hierarchy of virtues) of the Platonists, but not all his points are compelling. The mention of Proclus' approach (from a work a century later) cannot explain our text.

[55] 'He praises the impious, particularly Julian the Apostate, and this history is the result of his effort to put together an encomium of that ruler' (*Bibliotheca* Cod. 77, I p. 158–60; trans. Blockley 1981, modified). Wright 1921 also points to an echo at *VPS* § 451 in Tzetzes, *Chiliad* x. 885.

what sort of men founded, built, and adorned it, and cease to accuse our faith of such rustic simplicity, and recognize rather their own ignorance.[56]

Here we find Porphyry again, who also featured in Eunapius' early pages, but now as a target, not a model. Both works, then, reflect a polemical streak and have recourse to the learned polemicist for their own agenda. I have not, however, found any strong evidence so far to support a direct connection between Jerome and Eunapius.[57]

The clash of religious and philosophical perspectives seems to have come to a head because the fourth century AD was a period during which Christianity consolidated its position within the social and political structures of the Roman empire. Several important decisions by emperors Constantine and Theodosius reinforced the church's position and sealed the fate of pagan polytheism, banning its rituals and destroying its places of worship. From Constantine's expedient adoption of the faith in 312 to the Nicene Council in 325, to the Theodosian decrees in the 390s and to the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Christianity seemed to be marching triumphantly to its seemingly inescapable domination. The assault on two famous temples in Delphi and Alexandria underlined this development, especially since emperor Theodosius did not prevent these insensitive acts of religious intolerance (*VPS* § 472). Theodosius' endorsement of the Nicene Creed effectively abolished the practice of pagan rituals officially (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.12 [AD 392]).

Despite his personal encounter with Christianity, it is striking that Eunapius' comments on its rise and impact divulge very limited knowledge of the actual doctrine, no tolerance for their various lifestyles, and an enduring bitterness over the premature death of his hero Julian (the last pagan emperor whose nickname

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[56] Trans. Richardson 1892 (slightly modified).

[57] McKitterick 2004, p. 223 regards the *De uiris illustribus* as a work that offers a 'very particular and original perspective on the early church, for he constructs what is in effect a *history* of the church in terms of the authors who contributed the narratives and took part in the theological debates perceived as central to the establishment of the Christian faith' (my emphasis).

'the Apostate' was of course a Christian label).[58] At the same time, he offers very little that may count as philosophy in these *bioi*. The work seems motivated by a mixture of nostalgia and Hellenic pride.[59] He also places himself at the nexus of three important domains (philosophy, rhetoric, and medicine), thus boosting his own importance by the links he claims to have to the leaders of each area. These are further indications, I would submit, that his focus was not on making a philosophical or ideological case, but on creating an impressive dossier of illustrious men (σπουδαῖοι) and their spectacular deeds (τὰ ἔργα), which could enhance the status of his heroes without paying much attention to the historicity of the accounts. Truth can be a capricious thing in ancient biography, and Eunapius clearly did not shy away from fictionalising and enhancing the actions of his cherished teachers and their circles. By placing himself at the centre of three groups of distinguished men, he attempted to raise his own profile and that of those sages, who in his eyes represented the best of Hellenic culture and moral excellence.

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[58] See, e.g., Photius (cited n. 55 above) and Teitler 2016.

[59] Cf. Buck 1977, p. 391: 'on the spiritual level, the *Lives* are most clearly indebted to Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*'.

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Abstract

Polemic was a crucial aspect of the ancient philosophical tradition. Its role in constructing philosophical arguments has mostly been studied for the classical and Hellenistic periods (and more work remains to be done). For the fourth-century author Eunapius of Sardis scholars have not paid copious attention to the significance of polemic in his *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists*. Written from a pagan perspective, his dismay over the growing presence of Christianity triggered outbursts of polemic and invective as reflected in the *Lives* and the fragments of his other major work, a historical account covering the late third and fourth century (ed. Blockley 1981). But there are also more subtle moves against them. In my view characterising very selective and sometimes incoherent sketches as 'biography' does not do justice to their purpose. But if we take *bios* in the sense of 'way of life', the focus on the moral integrity of the individuals from Plotinus to Chrysanthius (Eunapius' teacher) acquires added meaning. This act of 'supersizing' these Hellenes I consider a part of a broader polemical agenda which has only recently come to the fore (Becker 2013, Goulet 2014), but is still underexplored. Eunapius wants to show how extraordinary these Hellenic men and one woman (Sosipatra) are. And to achieve this, Eunapius does not shy away from exaggeration and confabulation. The often implicit polemic is, I believe, closely linked to the personalities and various lineages he describes. The work describes three communities of outstanding pagan individuals, all three linked to Eunapius in some way. Thus, it not only pursues a counter-narrative against the Christian saints' lives, but also aims to bolster the significance of these communities, as Ed Watts (2005) has already pointed out. Eunapius reserves a special place for the Iamblichan community of philosophers, revealing how he sees himself as standing at the intersection of several important pagan networks, which should be considered superior to the Christian saints.

CORENTIN TRESNIE

BIOGRAPHY AS IMPLICIT PHILOSOPHICAL POLEMICS

PORPHYRY'S *LIFE OF PLOTINUS* AND IAMBLICHUS' *PYTHAGOREAN LIFE*

1. *Introduction*

Much has been written about the polemic that can be found in Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and its direct answer, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*. Let us first summarise this case. Porphyry, the third-century Neoplatonic philosopher and scholar, wrote what appears to be a series of questions and criticisms about ancient polytheistic doctrines and practices. This text was formulated as a letter addressed to a (maybe fictional) Egyptian priest named Anebo. The exact content of this letter is lost, but it has been partially reconstructed using the fragments and testimonies found in Augustine's polemics and in Iamblichus' answer.[1] The latter, a close acquaintance and probably pupil of Porphyry, took the identity of another Egyptian priest (which is probably fictional too) named Abammon, the master of Anebo. Under this pseudonym, Iamblichus sought to refute all of Porphyry's objections and to argue for a coherent and all-encompassing system of theology and theurgy, forgotten by the Greeks (like Porphyry) and their philosophy, but still preserved by the Egyptian priests.[2] According to him, divination, sacrifices, prayers and Mysteries are no irrational slides (as Porphyry seems to have implied), but rather forms of a higher participation to the divine order: philosophy is not

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[1] See the whole introduction in Saffrey & Segonds 2012.

[2] One can find a useful synthesis about this text in Saffrey & Segonds 2013 and their bibliography.

enough to grant ascent or happiness to the human soul.[3] A wide range of interpretations of this debate is available, from the story of a heated clash between rationalism and theurgy[4] to the narrative of a theatrical but nonetheless friendly and maybe even didactic exchange about the limits of philosophy.[5] Whichever exegesis we choose, we are, in this case, in front of two strong characters, addressing strong claims (albeit in the form of questions) to one another, with a strong structure of argumentation, the point of which is usually quite clear: to refute the opposing theses.

Much less studied are the ways in which Porphyry and Iamblichus polemicise with each other outside of the specific staging of the epistolary exchange between Porphyry and Anebo-Abammon.[6] Among these ways is the writing of biographies. In Late Antiquity, writing a biography is a common practice, especially among the commentators of authoritative philosophers. As one is supposed to explain any author by taking into account both his texts and his life, the narrative one applies to the author's way of living is a crucial part of the exegesis.[7] In this perspective, no aspect, however contemplative or practical it may be, is left behind as unimportant, provided it serves the biographer's purpose.[8] Therefore, the point is less to give an accurate account of the actual deeds of the said philosopher than to build a character both edifying and corresponding to the expectations of the readership.[9] What is expected is a charismatic figure, often of noble birth, an exemplary and inspiring personality, surrounded by disciples and performing impressive actions.[10] These aspects are important, because what matters is not only the mere consistency between

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[3] See, e.g., *On the Mysteries* [*Myst.*] 10.1–6.

[4] Dodds 1951, p. 283–99; Clarke 2001, p. 7; Saffrey & Segonds 2012, p. xxvii–xxxii.

[5] Athanassiadi 1993; Broze & Van Liefferinge 2002; Addey 2014, p. 127–49.

[6] Some important remarks about the implicit polemics in the Platonic commentaries are made by Dillon throughout his 2009 edition of Iamblichus' *Platonic Commentaries*.

[7] Mansfeld 1994, p. 177–91.

[8] Goarzin 2017.

[9] Hägg, Rousseau & Høgel 2000, p. 4–21.

[10] In other words, such a figure should fall under the category labelled 'holy man' by Fowden 1982.

the texts and the life of the philosopher: he should also qualify as a carrier of authority, in particular of epistemic authority.[11]

Pythagoras is an excellent candidate for this exemplarity and authority: both his reputation and his temporal remoteness make him useful for creating a paradigmatic sage.[12] It is beyond reasonable doubt that Iamblichus, in his *Pythagorean Life*, uses these features to support his educational program,[13] by using various strategies of attribution of epistemic authority to Pythagoras himself, while at the same time constructing his character.[14] Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras*, on the other hand, does not seem to carry much philosophical weight, as it is only a chapter in his larger *History of Philosophy*; things are different in his introduction to the *Enneads*, the *Life of Plotinus*.[15] In this biography, Porphyry needs to legitimate both his edition of his master's text and his own philosophy as a worthy continuation of the Plotinian teachings: this text is of great importance for him, and he uses numerous discursive strategies to support his implicit claim of legitimacy as well as his view of how a true philosopher should live.[16] It has been remarked that both *Lives* display several interesting similarities and oppositions, that they are as in dialogue with one another.[17]

In what follows, I will explore some of these parallels and show how each of them can be related to other texts in which Porphyry and Iamblichus develop, in a more explicit and theoretical way, positions that are embodied in the lives of Plotinus and Pythagoras as they describe them. By doing so, I want to illustrate that these biographies, in addition to their usually recognised purpose (Porphyry wrote his *Life of Plotinus* as an introduction to the *Enneads*, Iamblichus his *Pythagorean Life* as a protreptic introduction to his work *On Pythagoreanism*[18]), serve as a subtle continuation of

[11] On the concept of (epistemic) authority and its constitutive attribution, see Opsomer & Ulacco 2016.

[12] Macris 2006.

[13] More specifically, the moral education concerning the first levels of virtue, see O'Meara 2019, p. 161–62.

[14] On these strategies, see Opsomer (forthcoming).

[15] Edwards 1993, p. 159–61.

[16] Saffrey 1992; Männlein-Robert 2002.

[17] Männlein-Robert 2016.

[18] O'Meara 1989, p. 30–39.

the larger polemic between the two philosophers. It does not necessarily imply that one is a direct answer to the other—in fact, it is unclear which one is the first to have been written[19]—but rather that at least one of them (and plausibly both) is aimed at giving more weight to its author's position on the topics of bodily passions, soul's progression, traditional cult and education. The difference between the titles (genitive versus adjective) should not be given excessive weight: the preface of the *Enneads* is a 'Plotinian life', just as the first text of Iamblichus' work *On Pythagoreanism* is also a 'life of Pythagoras'. But let us look at the evidence.

2. *The Body and Its Passions*

2.1. Birth and Ancestry

The first words that appear to any reader of Porphyry's edition of the *Enneads* present a very specific Plotinus:

> Plotinus, the philosopher active during our own lifetime, gave the impression of being ashamed about having a body; he certainly could not stand talking about his race, his parents, or his original homeland (trans. Gerson et al. 2018, slightly modified).[20]

The usual rules of ancient biography are here subverted: Porphyry deliberately avoids the traditional *topos* of the philosopher's noble birth, maybe to emphasise his spiritual personality or to insist on Plotinus' true apex: his death.[21] It need not mean that Plotinus is of low origin, but rather that Porphyry wants to make very clear—again: these are the first lines of the text—that his master had no interest in this matter whatsoever, and that neither should we, if we are to follow him. Iamblichus' account of Pythagoras' birth and ancestry is more conventional:

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[19] Edwards 1993, p. 161–63; Clark 2000, p. 35; O'Meara 2016, p. 50–52.

[20] *Life of Plotinus* [*Plot.*] 1.1–4: Πλωτῖνος ὁ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς γεγονὼς φιλόσοφος ἐῴκει μὲν αἰσχυνομένῳ ὅτι ἐν σώματι εἴη. Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης διαθέσεως οὔτε περὶ τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ διηγεῖσθαι ἠνείχετο οὔτε περὶ τῶν γονέων οὔτε περὶ τῆς πατρίδος.

[21] Männlein-Robert 2002, p. 583–87.

> They say that Mnesarchos and Pythais, the parents of Pythagoras, were of the house and family of Ankaios the colonist. Such is the high birth ascribed to Pythagoras by his fellow-citizens; but one of the Samian poets says he was the son of Apollo (trans. Clark 1989).[22]

The next pages elaborate on circumstances of Pythagoras' conception and the journeys of his father.[23] There seems to be no shame associated with birth and embodiment, or at least the idea is that no embarrassment is needed about such facts: Iamblichus' Pythagoras made no effort to keep quiet his origins, while Porphyry's Plotinus saw them as unworthy of mention. A perfectly sensible explanation would be that the aim of each text is different: Porphyry is arguing about how close he was to his (adult) master while Iamblichus needs to display a thorough knowledge of Pythagoras' legendary pedigree in order for his wider project to be taken seriously. Besides, Iamblichus merely conforms to the standard convention of ancient biography,[24] which demands little explanation. However, Porphyry does not only omit to describe Plotinus' origins,[25] he also insists on the latter's refusal to provide any clue on the subject. This might reflect an actual preference on Plotinus' part or (and it is not exclusive) it may contribute to the construction of the Porphyrian sage. In order to decide whether this is the case, we shall need to compare this specification with other passages.

2.2. Health

In the *Life of Plotinus*, the contempt for the body is quickly taken to the next level: Porphyry's master is supposed to have suffered from digestive problems, refusing any kind of therapy except for his daily rubbing; when the people who rubbed him down suc-

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[22] *Pythagorean Life* [*VP*] 4–5: φασὶ τοίνυν Μνήμαρχον καὶ Πυθαΐδα τοὺς Πυθαγόραν γεννήσαντας ἐκ ταύτης εἶναι τῆς οἰκίας καὶ τῆς συγγενείας τῆς ἀπ᾽ Ἀγκαίου γεγενημένης τοῦ τὴν ἀποικίαν στείλαντος. ταύτης δὲ τῆς εὐγενείας λεγομένης παρὰ τοῖς πολίταις ποιητής τις τῶν παρὰ τοῖς Σαμίοις γεγενημένων Ἀπόλλωνος αὐτὸν εἶναί φησι λέγων οὕτως.

[23] *VP* 5–8.

[24] Hägg, Rousseau & Høgel 2000.

[25] Including his birthplace Lycopolis, although he probably knew it; see Brisson 1992.

cumbed from a plague, Plotinus withdrew the treatment and he, in turn, became ill.[26] What we have here is a philosopher who neglects the most elementary care of his own body and encourages others to do the same.[27] This is consistent with his widespread reputation as an ascetic, prone to strict fast, mystic and enlightened to the point of being oblivious to bodily affections. However, this is but Porphyry's version of his master's life and thought.[28] When we turn to the writings of Plotinus himself, we are told quite a different story:

> How could not it be right for a lawgiver to agree that they suffer this as paying the penalty for their laziness and indulgence, youths who, after being shown what exercises they should do, looked idly by as they became fattened lambs, the prey of wolves, as a result of their laziness and their soft and listless living? [...] For the law says that those who are brave, not those who pray, are to come out safe from wars. For it is not those who pray but those who take care of the land who harvest the fruits, nor do those remain healthy who do not take care of their health. And one should not also be annoyed if the wicked get larger harvests or if things should go better in general for those who work their land more (trans. Gerson et al. 2018, slightly modified).[29]

Although one cannot exclude the possibility of a Plotinus not living up to his own standards, the picture drawn by Porphyry has nothing to do with a fidelity to his master's *thought*.[30] Rather, it appears that he has ignored passages such as the one quoted above in order to accentuate the otherworldliness of Plotinus. But for

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[26] *Plot.* 2.1–10.

[27] See *Plot.* 7.31–46 below.

[28] On this topic, see the important reminder of O'Meara 2016.

[29] *Enneads* III 2 (47), 8.21–26 & 37–42: Ἤ πῶς οὐκ ὀρθὸν καὶ τὸν νομοθέτην συγχωρεῖν ταῦτα μὲν πάσχειν ἐκείνους δίκην ἀργίας καὶ τρυφῆς διδόντας, οἳ ἀποδεδειγμένων γυμνασίων αὐτοῖς [οἶδ'] ὑπ' ἀργίας καὶ τοῦ ζῆν μαλακῶς καὶ ἀνειμένως περιεῖδον ἑαυτοὺς ἄρνας καταπιανθέντας λύκων ἁρπαγὰς εἶναι; [...] σῴζεσθαι γὰρ ἐκ πολέμων φησὶ δεῖν ὁ νόμος ἀνδριζομένους, ἀλλ' οὐκ εὐχομένους· οὐδὲ γὰρ κομίζεσθαι καρποὺς εὐχομένους ἀλλὰ γῆς ἐπιμελουμένους, οὐδέ γε ὑγιαίνειν μὴ ὑγείας ἐπιμελουμένους· οὐδ' ἀγανακτεῖν δέ, εἰ τοῖς φαύλοις πλείους γίνοιντο καρποὶ ἢ ὅλως αὐτοῖς γεωργοῦσιν εἴη ἄμεινον.

[30] *Pace* Männlein-Robert 2002.

what purpose? Before investigating Porphyry's own thought, let us look at a comparable text in Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Life*:

> There was a pregnant saying, like the advice of an oracle, which summed up and epitomised his beliefs: he addressed it to everyone everywhere, both the few and the many. 'These things are to be avoided by every means, eradicated by fire or iron or any other means: *disease from the body*, ignorance from the soul, luxury from the belly, faction from the city, division from the household, excess from everything' (trans. Clark 1989; my italics).[31]

While in the previous section, Iamblichus was simply following the conventional exposition of the noble ascendency of his character, the precise thematic parallel between the two *Lives* might suggest that one of them is an answer to the other. By the continuity he asserts between the care for the soul and for the body, Iamblichus (or Iamblichus' Pythagoras) is in direct contradiction with Porphyry (or Porphyry's Plotinus), and actually closer to what we can read in the *Enneads*. The good man ought to care enough for his body to keep it healthy, as disease is comparable with ignorance: both are seriously undesirable and one's ethical duty is to eliminate them as soon as possible.

2.3. Breaking Away from the Body

Can we relate such discrepancies to other, non-biographical texts of our two authors? To begin with, it is possible to find an illuminating clue in one of the most explicit of Porphyry's texts:

> For a start, it is as it were the foundation and underpinning of purification to recognise that one is a soul bound down in an alien entity of a quite distinct nature. In the second place, taking one's start from this conviction, one should gather oneself together from the body even, as it were, in a local sense, but

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[31] *VP* 34: πυκνὸν γὰρ ἦν αὐτῷ πρὸς ἅπαντας πανταχῇ πολλοὺς καὶ ὀλίγους τὸ τοιοῦτον ἀπόφθεγμα, χρησμῷ θεοῦ συμβουλευτικῷ ὅμοιον, ἐπιτομή τις ὡσπερεὶ καὶ ἀνακεφαλαίωσίς τις τῶν αὐτῷ δοκούντων· ʿφυγαδευτέον πάσῃ μηχανῇ καὶ περικοπτέον πυρὶ καὶ σιδήρῳ καὶ μηχαναῖς παντοίαις ἀπὸ μὲν σώματος νόσον, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχῆς ἀμαθίαν, κοιλίας δὲ πολυτέλειαν, πόλεως δὲ στάσιν, οἴκου δὲ διχοφροσύνην, ὁμοῦ δὲ πάντων ἀμετρίαν'.

at any rate adopting an attitude of complete disaffection with respect to the body (trans. Dillon, see Brisson 2005).[32]

In this light, it is easier to understand why Porphyry would describe Plotinus as an ascetic who completely despises the care for the body, even if it means misrepresenting him: a wise soul—as Porphyry understands it—should as much as possible strive to be freed from the body and certainly not encourage any form of positive concern for it. For the same reason (as will become clearer in the next section), there is no pride or satisfaction to be found in one's birth, in the descent of the soul into the body, since this is precisely the condition in need of an escape, of a purification. If there is any feeling to be associated with it, it is the shame, the embarrassment of even having a body. Since his Pythagoras does not display this kind of discomfort, we may expect that Iamblichus' views on the relation between the soul and the care for the body are different. Now, indeed, we can find in his (or 'Abamon's') answer to Porphyry that the ascent of the soul towards the intelligible realm is not to be set in opposition to its descent in the body, and that, on the contrary, the self-improvement through theurgy and the care for the body are but two sides of the same coin, in harmony, as it were, with one another.[33] The point here is that the descent of the soul into the body is no tragic fall but rather the normal effect of the divine (i.e. intellectual) providence, which creates and orders bodies at the same time;[34] as a matter of consequence, the ascent of the soul back towards the divine is also an effect of the same providence, even more, it is the natural continuation of the descent.[35] The care for the body does not hinder the ascent of soul but prepares and accompanies it: well understood, thanks to philosophy and the knowledge of tradition, both can and will go hand in hand.[36] Thus, Pythagoras has no rea-

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[32] *Sententiae* 32.100–05: πρῶτον μὲν οἷον θεμέλιος καὶ ὑποβάθρα τῆς καθάρσεως τὸ γνῶναι ἑαυτὸν ψυχὴν ὄντα ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ πράγματι καὶ ἑτεροουσίῳ συνδεδεμένον. δεύτερον δὲ τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου ὁρμώμενον τοῦ πείσματος συνάγειν αὑτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῖς μὲν τόποις, πάντως γε μὴν ἀπαθῶς πρὸς αὐτὸ διατιθέμενον.

[33] *Myst.* 8.8.

[34] Iamblichus, *De anima* fr. 26 Dillon; *Myst.* 1.19; see also Shaw 1995, p. 21–27.

[35] *Myst.* 1.11–13; see also Shaw 1995, p. 129–42.

[36] *Myst.*1.1; 1.21; 2.1; see also Addey 2014, p. 189–205.

son to be ashamed about his birth or his body: both are part of the divine plan, which includes his own ascension; in order to follow it, he may and must assist this providence by taking good care of the body allotted to, and organised by, his soul.

We see then that both characters are the embodiment of their makers' personal doctrine as far as the relation of the soul to the body is concerned. But those more general views about the ascent of the soul, that I have sketched, find additional applications in the two biographies.

3. *Progression*

Since for Porphyry birth is a source of shame, it must imply some fault, or at least some deficiency or weakness. Conversely, he who owns no weakness or fault will no more be linked to a body:

> [Porphyry] not only banned the bodies of beasts from union with human souls but also held that the souls of wise men were so completely released from the bonds of the body that they abandoned every sort of body and were preserved for ever happy in the Father's presence (trans. Levine 1966).[37]

As is often the case for Porphyry's fragments, and especially when we have to rely on Augustine on such matters, caution is to be observed;[38] here, however, there seems to be no manipulation to suspect. This might be less the case with Porphyry's account of Plotinus' background:

> He, however, often quite spontaneously offered information about himself when he was in company, such as the fact that he used to go to his nurse, bare her breasts, and ask to suckle even when he was 7 years old and going to school. He was, however, shamed into stopping when she once called him an obnoxious brat. He was attracted to philosophy at the age of 27, and went to the best regarded philosophers in Alexandria, but he came away from their lectures depressed and miserable.

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[37] *De regressu animae*, fr. 300bF Smith = fr. 31 Madec & Goulet = *City of God* 13.19.39–41: [*N*]*on solum ab animis humanis remouisse corpora bestiarum, uerum etiam sapientium animas ita uoluisse de corporeis nexibus liberari, ut corpus omne fugientes beatae apud patrem sine fine teneantur.*

[38] Clark 2007.

He told one of his friends what was wrong, and the friend, who understood what his soul was yearning for, took him off to hear Ammonius, whom he had not yet tried (trans. Gerson et al. 2018).[39]

The fact that Porphyry felt the need to report the first episode is perplexing, unless one links it with Augustine's testimony. Porphyry needed his wise master to have evolved from an inferior condition (here, the irrational need of suckling his nurse's breasts) to a better one. If such a progression had not taken place, Plotinus would either have been a sage from the beginning (but in this case, his soul should not have descended into a body in the first place), or still be in need of improvement.[40] Hence the need of this strange episode, and probably also of his errant quest for a worthy master: Plotinus needs and wants to improve, but his path is difficult and at first uncertain. His tribulations are important to emphasise his evolution, which culminates in his death, i.e. his definitive liberation from the body and its turmoil,[41] celebrated in the so-called oracle of Apollo. According to it, Plotinus *was* a man, but through his efforts he surpassed the human condition and became a daemon, thereby weaning off the body forever and walking now the divine path of sinless light.[42] This oracle may be genuine [43] or composed by Porphyry himself,[44] it is in any case used by him to find, in the final fate of his master's soul, the confirmation of his personal views: Plotinus' soul, having lived the life of a wise man, became a daemon, free from the bounds of the body

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[39] *Plot*. 3.1–12: Ἃ μέντοι ἡμῖν αὐτὸς ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ταῖς ὁμιλίαις πολλάκις διηγεῖτο, ἦν τοιαῦτα. Προσφοιτᾶν μὲν γὰρ τῇ τροφῷ καίπερ εἰς γραμματοδιδασκάλου ἀπιόντα ἄχρις ὀγδόου ἔτους ἀπὸ γενέσεως ὄντα καὶ τοὺς μαζοὺς γυμνοῦντα θηλάζειν προθυμεῖσθαι· ἀκούσαντα δέ ποτε ὅτι ἀτηρόν ἐστι παιδίον, ἀποσχέσθαι αἰδεσθέντα. Εἰκοστὸν δὲ καὶ ὄγδοον ἔτος αὐτὸν ἄγοντα ὁρμῆσαι ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ τοῖς τότε κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν εὐδοκιμοῦσι συσταθέντα κατιέναι ἐκ τῆς ἀκροάσεως αὐτῶν κατηφῆ καὶ λύπης πλήρη, ὡς καί τινι τῶν φίλων διηγεῖσθαι ἃ πάσχοι· τὸν δὲ συνέντα αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ βούλημα ἀπενέγκαι πρὸς Ἀμμώνιον, οὗ μηδέπω πεπείρατο.

[40] Therefore, it makes no sense to assume that the silence on Plotinus' birth means that his soul was already divine, as suggested by Edwards 2000.

[41] The emphasis on the unknown birth and shameful childhood is thus a rhetorical device to magnify this final liberation, as is remarked by Männlein-Robert 2016.

[42] *Plot*. 22.23–30.

[43] As argued by Brisson & Flamand 1992 and Goulet 1992.

[44] As argued by Schwyzer 1986.

and from the risk of any future incarnation, after a long evolution. Once again, this question is a point of strong disagreement with Iamblichus, who refuses such eschatology:

> Furthermore, I actually think that the purposes for which souls descend are different and that they thereby also cause differences in the manner of the descent. For the soul that descends for the salvation, purification, and perfection of this realm is immaculate in its descent. The soul, on the other hand, that directs itself about bodies for the exercise and correction of its own character is not entirely free of passions and was not sent away free in itself. The soul that comes down here for punishment and judgment seems somehow to be dragged and forced (trans. Finamore & Dillon 2002).[45]

According to Iamblichus, souls are distributed in three categories of unequal worth and perfection: a higher (theurgic) class of souls with no need of further improvement and descended for the perfection and good order of the world, a middle class of souls concerned mainly by self-improvement, and a lower, majority class of souls only preoccupied by pragmatic affairs.[46] None of them cease to descent into the body: wiser souls simply descent for different purposes. Consequently, and contrary to what is the case in the Porphyrian system, being born is no indication that one still needs to improve. A soul that is as divine as possible, like that of Pythagoras, will animate a body to act as the arm of the gods' providence in the corporeal world,[47] enjoying a divine superiority and happiness,[48] manifested by his (corporeal) beauty, temperance and charisma, all of which making him near invincible and clearly signifying his special status: 'it was as if a daemon had come to stay in Samos'.[49] As we have seen, there is no opposition between

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[45] Iamblichus, *De anima* fr. 29 Dillon: Οἶμαι τοίνυν καὶ τὰ τέλη διάφορα ὄντα καὶ τοὺς τρόπους τῆς καθόδου τῶν ψυχῶν ποιεῖν διαφέροντας. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ καὶ καθάρσει καὶ τελειότητι τῶν τῇδε κατιοῦσα ἄχραντον ποιεῖται καὶ τὴν κάθοδον· ἡ δὲ διὰ γυμνασίαν καὶ ἐπανόρθωσιν τῶν οἰκείων ἠθῶν ἐπιστρεφομένη περὶ τὰ σώματα οὐκ ἀπαθής ἐστι παντελῶς, οὐδὲ ἀφεῖται ἀπόλυτος καθ' ἑαυτήν· ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ δίκῃ καὶ κρίσει δεῦρο κατερχομένη συρομένη πως ἔοικε καὶ συνελαυνομένη.

[46] *Myst.* 5.18; *De anima* fr. 35 Dillon.

[47] Shaw 1995, p. 107–26.

[48] *Letter to Sopater on Virtue* (16), fr. 4 Dillon.

[49] *VP* 9–10, concluded by ὡς δὲ δαίμων τις ἀγαθὸς ἐπιδημῶν τῇ Σάμῳ.

the ascent and the descent of the soul: the sage may contemplate the intelligible while at the same time being in a body. Being born does not prevent Pythagoras from being and staying in communion with the divine, from being himself a kind of daemon. Even if he does travel to find eminent masters, Iamblichus makes very clear that Pythagoras is already far more advanced that they are, even on his first journey to Egypt: his mere presence and composure are enough to bless the ship and scare the mariners trying to enslave him.[50]

4. *Cult and the Gods*

An important disagreement between Porphyry and Iamblichus is the issue of traditional cult: to what extend should a philosopher or otherwise enlightened person observe the popular rites, how useful are they for him? Although the former is far from being completely hostile to any form of worship,[51] there are some sacrifices that he rejects, at least for virtuous people:

> It is they [the (evil) *daimones*] who rejoice in the 'drink-offerings and smoking meat' on which their pneumatic part grows fat, for it lives on vapours and exhalations, in a complex fashion and from complex sources, and it draws power from the smoke that rises from blood and flesh. So an intelligent, temperate man will be wary of making sacrifices through which he will draw such beings to himself (trans. Clark 2013).[52]

Material and especially animal sacrifices are enjoyed only by wicked daemons, and those are not to be worshipped by a good man. If there are offerings proper to him, they are addressed to higher gods and consist in the offering of plants,[53] liquids,[54] or

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[50] *VP* 12–17.

[51] Addey 2014, passim.

[52] *On Abstinence* 2.42–43: οὗτοι οἱ χαίροντες ʻλοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ τεʼ, δι' ὧν αὐτῶν τὸ πνευματικὸν καὶ σωματικὸν πιαίνεται. ζῇ γὰρ τοῦτο ἀτμοῖς καὶ ἀναθυμιάσεσι ποικίλως διὰ τῶν ποικίλων, καὶ δυναμοῦται ταῖς ἐκ τῶν αἱμάτων καὶ σαρκῶν κνίσαις. διὸ συνετὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ σώφρων εὐλαβηθήσεται τοιαύταις χρῆσθαι θυσίαις, δι' ὧν ἐπισπάσεται πρὸς ἑαυτὸν τοὺς τοιούτους. See also *On Abstinence* 2.40–41 and the *Letter to Anebo* fr. 51, 61–62 & 90 Saffrey.

[53] *On Abstinence* 2.58.

[54] *Philosophy from the Oracles* fr. 329F Smith.

even better: thoughts.[55] Meat sacrifices are only worthy of inferior men, and are therefore to be abandoned as quickly as possible.[56]

In contrast, Iamblichus holds a more 'cumulative' perspective on the attitude of the good men towards sacrifice and rites in general: 'anyone who fails to allot to all their due and welcome each of them with suitable honour will end up unsatisfied and deprived of any share with the gods' (trans. Clarke et al. 2004).[57] He, too, distinguishes various kinds of sacrifices, each relevant for a different level of gods,[58] but never in the process of ascension is one allowed to cease to worship the lower divine levels: the theurgist is supposed to celebrate to the demiurgy as a whole, in all its layers.[59] As a consequence, most if not all of the traditional rites, including the most material ones, are to be scrupulously observed by the good man, viz. the theurgist, while according to Porphyry, some rites are fit only for the masses, or are even plainly misguiding, and should in no case concern the philosopher. If we assume that such a disagreement lies in the background, it is possible to better understand a very debated passage of the *Life of Plotinus*:

> Amelius was fond of sacrifices, and used to busy himself with rites of the new moon, and rites to allay fears. He once tried to get Plotinus to participate with him, but Plotinus said: 'They must come to me, not I to them' (trans. Gerson et al. 2018).[60]

The sage has no need or wish to worship encosmic powers, as he is already beyond that level; the daemons celebrated in the new moon festival will not help Plotinus to improve further, but the reverse might be true.[61] In any case, traditional rites, including sacrifices, are a purification tool that should be left behind once used enough; no reverence to these is due afterwards by the phi-

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[55] *Letter to Marcella* 23.

[56] *On Abstinence* 2.12–13.

[57] *Myst.* 5.21: ὁ μὲν μὴ ἀπονείμας πᾶσι τὸ πρόσφορον καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιβάλλουσαν τιμὴν ἕκαστον δεξιωσάμενος, ἀτελὴς ἀπέρχεται καὶ ἄμοιρος τῆς μετουσίας τῶν θεῶν.

[58] *Myst.* 5.14–19.

[59] *Myst.* 5.22 & 9.9.

[60] *Plot.* 10.33–36: Φιλοθύτου δὲ γεγονότος τοῦ Ἀμελίου καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ κατὰ νουμηνίαν καὶ τὰς ἑορτὰς ἐκπεριιόντος καί ποτε ἀξιοῦντος τὸν Πλωτῖνον σὺν αὐτῷ παραλαβεῖν ἔφη· 'ἐκείνους δεῖ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἔρχεσθαι, οὐκ ἐμὲ πρὸς ἐκείνους'.

[61] This of course is Porphyry's narrative. About what this tells us on Plotinus' actual opinion, see van den Berg 1999.

losopher, who may continue his ascension by pure thought. On the other hand, Iamblichus' Pythagoras is very careful about the good observance of rites: he claimed that every decision should be guided by the will of the gods as its aim as well as its starting point, he encouraged the use of divination and other sacred rites in order to learn about this will, against those who depreciate such piety as 'imposture' (ἀλαζονεία) for want of knowledge of the rites' divine origin and lack of understanding of their true purpose.[62] This last precision could very well refer to Porphyry's criticism of divination rites,[63] and the passage as a whole clearly shows Pythagoras and his disciples subordinating ethics to the obedience to the gods' will as revealed by these rites. Being a soul of the first, i.e. higher, category does not prevent Pythagoras from observing the rites. They are indeed not only a tool for the purification of a soul still in need of improvement, but the medium through which the sage can gain access to the divine plan.[64] Rites are not, or not only, the beginning of Pythagoras' teaching as Iamblichus sees it, but also its summit, as the very point of his philosophy and system of education is to make people able, by rites and other means, to read in the universe the will of the gods.[65]

5. *Education*

This brings me to the last of the interesting oppositions I want to point out in this paper: both *Lives* present not only the portrait of a wise master, but also of one of his most exemplary pupils. Let us begin, as usual, with Porphyry's account, that of a fellow student in Plotinus' circle:

> Another Senator was Rogatianus who came to reject this life to such an extent that he gave up his possessions, dismissed his slaves, and resigned his position. He was due to be inducted into the office of Praetor—the Lictors were even there. But he not only refused to go on, he resigned all public office. After he relinquished the management of his own household as

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[62] *VP* 137–38.
[63] *Letter to Anebo* fr. 60–63 & 85–87 Saffrey.
[64] *Myst.* 2.10–11 & *VP* 139.
[65] *VP* 70.

well, he would dine and sleep at the houses of various friends and acquaintances, only eating every other day. [...] Plotinus took him into his inner circle and was full of praise for him— eventually adducing him as a good example for philosophers (trans. Gerson et al. 2018).[66]

This is closer to the ideal of the *Sententiae* than to Plotinian ethics, as was also the case in the passages exposed in the first section. To despise the glory and especially the material advantages of the *cursus honorum*,[67] as well as the bodily pleasure (or mere repletion) of a daily meal and an owned bed: this is worthy of the ascetic sage praised by the biographer. Actually, to make this former senator an example for the philosophers is excessive not only concerning Plotinus' thought, but also Porphyry's: he never elsewhere ranks the purificatory virtues, such as those displayed by Rogatianus, above the contemplative virtues of the philosopher;[68] perhaps he exaggerates in reaction to the value given by Iamblichus (and, to some extent, also by Plotinus) to bodily vigour? Be that as it may, Iamblichus' Pythagoras shows different preferences concerning his choice of pupils:

> So he kept an eye on a gifted and well-coordinated ball-player at the gymnasium, one of those who were athletic and muscular but lacked financial resources, reckoning that this man would be easy to persuade by the offer of a generous subsidy without trouble for himself. He called the young man over after his bath, and promised to keep him supplied with funds to maintain his athletic training, if he would learn—in instalments, painlessly, consistently, so as not to be overburdened—some

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[66] *Plot.* 7.31–40 & 44–46: Ἦν δὲ καὶ Ῥογατιανὸς ἐκ τῆς συγκλήτου, ὃς εἰς τοσοῦτον ἀποστροφῆς τοῦ βίου τούτου προκεχωρήκει ὡς πάσης μὲν κτήσεως ἀποστῆναι, πάντα δὲ οἰκέτην ἀποπέμψασθαι, ἀποστῆναι δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀξιώματος· καὶ πραίτωρ προϊέναι μέλλων παρόντων τῶν ὑπηρετῶν μήτε προελθεῖν μήτε φροντίσαι τῆς λειτουργίας, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ οἰκίαν ἑαυτοῦ ἑλέσθαι κατοικεῖν, ἀλλὰ πρός τινας τῶν φίλων καὶ συνήθων φοιτῶντα ἐκεῖ τε δειπνεῖν κἀκεῖ καθεύδειν, σιτεῖσθαι δὲ παρὰ μίαν [...] Τοῦτον ἀπεδέχετο ὁ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ἐπαινῶν διετέλει εἰς ἀγαθὸν παράδειγμα τοῖς φιλοσοφοῦσι προβαλλόμενος.

[67] A few lines before, in *Plot.* 7.19–21, Porphyry tells us that Plotinus used to chastise his (otherwise much loved) friend and disciple Zethus for his political tendencies.

[68] He even does the opposite in the *Sententiae* 32, passim, but it may be that it takes more than an ordinary philosopher to reach the level of contemplative virtues.

teachings he himself had learnt from foreigners in his youth, but which were already escaping him through the forgetfulness of old age. The young man accepted, and persevered in the hope of maintenance, and Pythagoras set out to instil in him arithmetic and geometry. He demonstrated every point on a drawing-board, and paid the young man three obols per figure (geometrical figure, that is) in return for his trouble. He did this for some considerable time, introducing him to study with great enthusiasm and excellent method, still paying him three obols for each figure learnt. But when the young man, led down the right path, had some grasp of excellence and of delight and progress in learning, and Pythagoras saw what was happening, that he would not of his own choice abandon his studies—indeed that nothing could keep him from them—he pretended he was poor and could not afford the three obols. The young man said 'I can learn, and receive your teachings, without that', and Pythagoras retorted 'But I cannot afford the necessities of life even for myself, and when one has to work for one's daily needs and food it is quite wrong to be distracted by timewasting things like drawing-boards'. The young man, reluctant to lose the thread of his studies, said 'I will provide for you in future as you have done for me, I will pay you back three obols per figure' (trans. Clark 1989).[69]

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[69] *VP* 21–24: παρατηρήσας εὐφυῶς τινα καὶ εὐκινήτως ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ σφαιρίζοντα τῶν φιλογυμναστούντων μὲν καὶ σωμασκούντων, πενήτων δ' ἄλλως καὶ ἀπορωτέρων, λογισάμενος ὅτι εὐπειθῆ ἕξει, εἰ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια ἔκπλεά τις αὐτῷ ἀμεριμνοῦντι παρέχοι, προσκαλεσάμενος μετὰ τὸ λουτρὸν τὸν νεανίαν ἐπηγγείλατο αὐτάρκη αὐτῷ ἐφόδια εἰς τὴν τῆς σωμασκίας ὑποτροφὴν καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν διηνεκῶς παρέξειν, εἰ διαδέξαιτο αὐτοῦ κατὰ βραχύ τε καὶ ἀπόνως ἐνδελεχῶς τε, ὥστε μὴ ἀθρόως φορτισθῆναι, μαθήματά τινα, ἃ παρὰ βαρβάρων μὲν ἐξέμαθεν αὐτὸς νέος ὤν, ἀπολείπει δ' αὐτὸν ταῦτα ἤδη διὰ τὸ γῆρας καὶ τὴν τούτου ἀμνημοσύνην. ὑποσχομένου δὲ τοῦ νεανίου καὶ τῇ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἐλπίδι ὑπομείναντος τὴν δι' ἀριθμῶν μάθησιν καὶ γεωμετρίας ἐνάγειν αὐτῷ ἐπειρᾶτο, ἐπ' ἄβακος τὰς ἑκάστου ἀποδείξεις ποιούμενος, καὶ διδάσκων παντὸς σχήματος, ὅ ἐστι διαγράμματος, μισθὸν καὶ ἀντίπονον παρεῖχε τῷ νεανίᾳ τριώβολον. καὶ τοῦτο μέχρι πολλοῦ χρόνου διετέλεσε ποιῶν, φιλοτιμότατα μὲν καὶ σπουδαίως τάξει τε βελτίστῃ ἐμβιβάζων εἰς τὴν θεωρίαν, καθ' ἕκαστου δὲ σχήματος παράληψιν τριώβολον ἐπιδιδούς. ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ νεανίας ὁδῷ τινι ἐμμελεῖ ἀγόμενος τῆς ἐκπρεπείας ἤδη ἀντελαμβάνετο καὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ ἀκολουθίας τῆς ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασι, συνιδὼν τὸ γινόμενον ὁ σοφὸς καὶ ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ἑκὼν ἔτι ἀποσταίη οὐδὲ ἀπόσχοιτο τῆς μαθήσεως, οὐδ' εἰ πάντα πάθοι, πενίαν ὑπετιμήσατο καὶ ἀπορίαν τῶν τριωβόλων. ἐκείνου δὲ εἰπόντος ʽἀλλὰ καὶ χωρὶς τούτων οἷός τέ εἰμι μανθάνειν καὶ διαδέχεσθαί σου τὰ μαθήματα', ἐπήνεγκεν ʽἀλλ' οὐδ' αὐτὸς τὰ πρὸς τροφὴν ἐπιτήδεια ἔχω ἔτι οὐδ' εἰς ἐμαυτόν· δέον οὖν σχολάζειν εἰς πορισμὸν τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἀναγκαίων καὶ τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς οὐ καλῶς ἔχει ἄβακι καὶ ἀνονήτοις ματαιοπονήμασιν ἑαυτὸν ἀντιπερισπᾶν'. ὥστε τὸν νεανίαν δυσαποσπάστως τοῦ συνείρειν τὴν θεωρίαν ἔχοντα ʽκαὶ ταῦτ'' εἰπεῖν

I have quoted this text at length for it provides a few interesting details. First, Pythagoras went to the gymnasium to recruit his pupil among the most athletic and, at least in the beginning of his studies, he even funds him to allow him to continue his physical training. This contrasts with Rogatianus' fasting habits. Second, there is indeed a reversal of attachment, as the young man somehow finds the money to pay Pythagoras back in order to keep learning, but what he gives up are only the external goods (here, money), not physical health: both aspects are to be distinguished. Third, knowledge, here mathematical knowledge, is presented as an enjoyable end *per se*, not as a mere tool to accelerate the process of liberation from the affective bonds between soul and body, which is clearly the goal of Rogatianus. Let us recall Plotinus' alleged lack of interest for mathematical inquiry (see below), certainly shared by a man such as the former senator. To be fair, in the Iamblichean corpus, mathematics itself, as well as philosophy, are elsewhere also described as a preparation, but to a higher, non-discursive and divine form of knowledge[70] that *is* really enjoyable *per se*,[71] rather than to a particular ethical stance, which would only be a by-product of this knowledge.[72] Fourth, this means that personal transformation and improvement is a direct consequence of the content and method of Pythagoras' teaching: once the young man has had a taste of mathematical demonstration and understanding, he ends up finding delight in it, and actively looks to continue his training. On the other hand, Plotinus' courses consisted mainly in the collective discussion of philosophical texts and commentaries.[73] The exact relation between such a method and ethical self-improvement is unclear, and it is likely that Rogatianus' transformation has more to do with the personal charisma and example of Plotinus' life (or maybe with the discipline required by his teaching) than with the actual content of his courses.[74] As

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ἐγώ σοι λοιπὸν πoριῶ καὶ ἀντιπελαργήσω τρόπον τινά· κατὰ γὰρ ἕκαστον σχῆμα τριώβολον καὐτός σοι ἀντιπαρέξω'.

[70] *On Nicomachus' Introduction to Arithmetic* 4.185; 5.123; *Myst.* 1.21; 2.11.

[71] *Myst.* 10.1 & 5.

[72] *Letter to Sopater on Virtue* (16), fr. 4 Dillon.

[73] *Plot.* 13.10–17 & 14.10–16.

[74] Clark 2000, p. 39–40, has suggested to oppose the system-based approach of Iamblichus to the inspiring emulation provoked by the charisma of (Porphyry's?) Plotinus.

what seems to be essential to his ethical progress consists in spectacular renunciations and scrupulous self-deprivation rather than in intellectual achievement (or at least, such achievements are never mentioned in Rogatianus' case), he can be an example for the philosophers without even being one, while Pythagoras' pupil is a paradigmatic one as far as he became a diligent mathematician. Fifth and in relation to the previous points, this passage (as well as many others in the text and in the rest of Iamblichus' works on Pythagoreanism) shows how important mathematics is to the education of the soul and its self-improvement. This contrasts with Porphyry's portrait of his master: 'No so-called "geometrical" or "arithmetical" theorem evaded him, nor those of mechanics, optics, or music—though he himself was not specially trained to work in these areas'.[75] Indeed, this is the only reference to mathematics in the whole biography: according to Porphyry, Plotinus knows some mathematics but does not think it is relevant to teach it.[76] Granted, Pythagoras was universally considered as a prominent mathematician long before Iamblichus, while Plotinus never enjoyed the same reputation, but once again, the emphasis put on this theme by the biographers exceeds what is strictly required by the traditional representation of their characters.

Together with other oppositions of less certain significance (for example, that one is a rich, well connected, old or middle-aged man, the other a poor, isolated, young ball-player), this comparison suggests that not only the masters themselves but also other details of the biographies, for instance the profile of the paradigmatic pupil, are used by their authors to make their point. What emerges is an implicit dialogue between the two, which does not necessarily mean that one has the other's *text* in mind when writing his biography, but at least that they are criticising each other's *ideas* through the depiction of their competing conceptions about proper philosophical education.

[75] *Plot*. 14.7–10.

[76] Plotinus' explanations are indeed rarely focused on mathematical concerns; however, the existence and depth of treatises like *Enneads* VI 6 (34) should encourage us to temperate Porphyry's claims about Plotinus' training.

6. *Conclusion*

It has been argued that contrary to what will become common practice among Later Platonists, Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* is a factual and reliable piece of faithful biography,[77] but that this faithfulness is limited to Plotinus' *thought*, according to which his life is reinterpreted.[78] The texts commented above show that Porphyry was a clever writer and philosopher, but that factual faithfulness was not the main part of his agenda, at least not when he wrote the *Life* of his master. There may be several aspects to this agenda;[79] one of them appears to be an implicit polemical dialogue with Iamblichus' thought, especially as it is instilled into the *Pythagorean Life*. Both philosophers belong to the same tradition; they have common adversaries (among which the Christians, but also rival schools) who might—and sometimes did—take advantage of any division between the heirs of Platonism. So they might have decided to settle their disagreements behind the masks of fictional characters (e.g., Abamon) or the veil of innocent biographies, which themselves borrow literary tropes from various sources.[80] It certainly does not mean that their accounts are pure invention: Iamblichus mostly uses widespread stories about Pythagoras, and there is no reason to assume that Porphyry is telling blatant lies to a readership that may also have known Plotinus or heard first-hand stories about him. But the devil is in the detail: in which anecdotes are picked and given importance, in how each fact or saying is given meaning and is supposed to illuminate the others. In this respect, we can consider how the characters we are offered in both *Lives* oppose one another much more than the historical ones, for the little we can infer about them outside of these biased accounts.

What again are these figures? An ascetic Plotinus, born imperfect, who is ashamed to be in a body, strives to escape from it to the

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[77] Dillon 2006, who does not seem to consider Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Life* as belonging to the scope of his corpus for this question.

[78] Männlein-Robert 2002; let us note, however, that Männlein-Robert 2016 is much more cautious on this question.

[79] See Goulet-Cazé 1982; Saffrey 1992; O'Meara 2016.

[80] Among which are probably to be found the epicurean lost biographies, according to O'Meara 2019.

point of neglecting it, teaches others to do the same, with or without the help of disciplines like philosophy or mathematics, especially praises those who do like Rogatianus, and finally ascends to the rank of daemon, thereby leaving forever the cycle of incarnations and with it, the material world, source of all evil. A generous Pythagoras, born divine or daemonic, whose ascendency is no secret or shame, who calls to the good care of the world including one's own body, picks his pupils among sportsmen, but uses mainly the tools of philosophy and mathematics to teach how to see the divine providence in the cosmos, and whose final ascension is nothing but a likely new incarnation with the same role, forever coming back to this corporeal world to illuminate it and show how good its divine order is.

Such features only reflect what I take to be the most striking oppositions between the two biographies; it is not difficult to find many additional examples.[81] Those are not only literary choices reflecting differences of sensibility between Porphyry and Iamblichus, such differences being nonetheless significant. Rather, the contrast between their Plotinus and Pythagoras embodies some irreconcilable disagreements about the important issues of the human soul, its relation to the body, its hopes of evolution in this life and in the next ones, and the ways in which it may improve. Both philosophers have been able to express their arguments in other texts, probably in person too, since they knew each other very well. Biographies are not the place for explicit philosophical debates; still, neither has any of them given up his position. As a consequence, it is not unreasonable to consider that they were both very conscious that by putting emphasis on certain features of the protagonist they were describing, they were making a point against each other: it is no coincidence that striking oppositions between the two characters correspond to striking oppositions between the two philosophers.

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[81] One can compare for instance *Plot.* 2 with *VP* 237–40 (solidarity between disciples); *Plot.* 2.4–5 & 8.21–22 with 61 & 106–09 (food restrictions); 3.20–35 & 4.9–18 with 104 & 193 (secrecy); 7 & 9.1–12 with 68 & 80–81 (hierarchy inside the community); 11.1–12 with 136–39 & 229–30 (role of the prescience); 15.1–17 with 88; 19–20 (as well as 13.10–17 & 14.4–7) with 115–21 (teaching methods).

Which allows me to conclude: at least in the passages quoted above, Porphyry and Iamblichus are respectively using Plotinus and Pythagoras to continue their polemic on important ethical issues, in an implicit, subtle, but nonetheless uncompromising way.[82]

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Abstract

Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* and Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Life* display several passages in strong opposition to one another. At least in some significant cases, it is possible to show that the ethical stance adopted by each character corresponds to a position of his biographer about

questions that divide Porphyry and Iamblichus. Thus, both texts can be considered as a way for these philosophers to implicitly make a point against each other, concerning matters such as the attitude one must have towards the body, one's birth, health, passions and death; the possibility of the soul's progression and liberation from the body; the traditional Greek religion and in particular rites of divination and sacrifice; and what makes a good philosophical education. These are all important issues of a long standing polemic between Porphyry and Iamblichus. While this does not make them mere mouthpieces, one should therefore take into account that the Plotinus and Pythagoras described in these texts carry important concerns of their authors, who carefully choose the episodes they narrate according to their agenda.

PART 3
GRAMMARIANS AND RHETORICIANS

UTE TISCHER

COMPARISON AND COMPETITION
CICERO, VIRGIL AND THE AUTHORITY
OF THE INTERPRETER

The topic of my paper are two late antique testimonies from the beginning of the fifth century that place Cicero and Virgil in a competitive relationship and at the same time reflect a polemical debate between rival interpreters of poetry. Central issues in this debate are the reputation of poetry and prose both as literary genres and as subjects of instruction, the 'correct' reading of poetry and of Virgil in particular, and the question of who is competent and authorised to interpret and teach Virgil's works.

The starting point of the two passages, one from Servius' commentary on Virgil's *Eclogues*, written after AD 400, and the other from Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, written about AD 430, is a comparison between Cicero and Virgil. I shall first briefly introduce both texts and then sketch the history of three motives that intertwine within their argumentation, namely the comparison between Cicero and Virgil, the presentation of the poet Virgil as an orator, and polemics against grammarians as interpreters of Virgil's works. I shall conclude with some reflections on the rhetorical function and possible intentions for the use of the comparison motif by Servius and Macrobius.

1. *Comparison and Rivalry between Cicero and Virgil in Late Antiquity—Two Examples*

1.1. Servius. A Poetical Competition

Servius, the first of the two authors I would like to discuss, deals with the competition between Cicero and Virgil in two short

notes on Virgil's sixth and seventh *Eclogue*. The first of the two, a comment on *Ecl*. 6.11, has the form of a small anecdote:

> *dicitur autem* (i.e. *haec ecloga*) *ingenti fauore a Vergilio esse recitata, adeo ut, cum eam postea Cytheris meretrix cantasset in theatro, quam in fine Lycoridem uocat,* **stupefactus Cicero, cuius esset, requireret. et cum eum tandem aliquando uidisset, dixisse dicitur et ad suam et ad illius laudem 'magnae spes altera Romae'***: quod iste postea ad Ascanium transtulit, sicut commentatores loquuntur* (Servius, *Ecl*. 6.11).

> [*Eclogue* 6] is also said to have been recited by Virgil with enormous success, to such a degree that, when afterward the courtesan Cytheris, whom he lastly calls Lycoris, had sung it in the theater, the astonished Cicero asked whose it was. And after having seen him once, he is said to have said, praising both himself and Virgil: 'A second hope for the greatness of Rome!'. Virgil later said the same about Ascanius, as is affirmed by the commentators (trans. Putnam in Ziolkowski & Putnam 2008, adapted).

The story is about an alleged meeting between Cicero and Virgil during or after a theatre performance of young Virgil's *Bucolics*. Servius tells us that Cicero was said to have expressed his admiration of Virgil's poetry by reciting the second half of a hexameter (*magnae spes altera Romae*—'o you, second hope for the greatness of Rome!'), and that he, Cicero, did so in order 'to praise both himself and Virgil'. The anecdote closes with the punch line that Virgil was said to have taken up this praise later and to have inserted it in the twelfth book of the *Aeneid* as an epitheton for young Ascanius.

At first glance, this short narrative shows Cicero and Virgil in a carefully balanced relationship. There is praise for Cicero and praise for Virgil, and both authors are depicted at one and the same level as first and second hope for Roman literature. Cicero predicts the future fame of the young poet, and Virgil in return implicitly pays tribute to Cicero by including his verse in his own immortal poem. However, when we observe Cicero anxiously trying to equal Virgil and himself, before passing on the torch of Roman literature to his younger fellow, we also see a competition that has already been decided, as well as the transition from an old to a new literary paradigm. At the same time, the Cicero in

Servius' account assumes the role of the literary critic, which is usually the grammarian's role, attesting high quality and national value (*magnae spes altera Romae*) to the poet Virgil, whose works traditionally fell within the grammarian's field.[1]

A second note on *Ecl.* 7.16 and the line *et certamen erat Corydon cum Thyrside magnum* ('and the match was a mighty one, Corydon against Thyrsis') presents a similar situation of competition more explicitly.[2] Servius remarks:

> *certamen erat corydon cum thyrside*] *figurate locutus est, magnum certamen ille cum illo, ac si dicas,* **magna contentio est cum Cicerone Vergilius**. *et videtur nominativum pro genetivo posuisse; nam 'Corydonis' facit* (Servius, *Ecl.* 7.16).

> There was a match, Corydon against Thyrsis] He [i.e. the poet] uses a figure of speech, 'a mighty match, this person against that person', as if you would say 'a mighty competition, Virgil against Cicero'. *And apparently, he has used the nominative instead of the genitive, because the genitive would be 'Corydonis'* (trans. U.T.).

The remark deals with 'figured speech' in a double sense. First, the 'big competition between Virgil and Cicero' serves as an illustration to explain a 'figure of speech', the unusual syntactic construction of *certamen* with an apposition instead of a genitive (*antiptosis*).[3] By using this peculiar example, however, Servius

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[1] The story itself is historically unlikely and probably the result of later allegorical readings of the *Bucolics*. On its origin and cultural significance, see Höschele 2013 and Tischer 2016. That Cicero behaves like a grammarian becomes even clearer in the humanistic version of the anecdote in Virgil's *Vita Donatiana aucta*, where Cicero 'realized with sharp judgment that the verses were of no small talent' (*acri iudicio intellexisset non communi uena editos*), cf. *Vita Don. auct.* 41, p. 95 Brugnoli & Stok.

[2] Verg., *Ecl.* 7.16, cf. *Ecl.* 7.14–17: *quid facerem? neque ego Alcippen nec Phyllida habebam / depulsos a lacte domi quae clauderet agnos, / **et certamen erat, Corydon cum Thyrside, magnum**; / posthabui tamen illorum mea seria ludo*— 'What could I do? I had no Alcippe or Phyllis to pen my new-weaned lambs at home, and the match was a mighty one, Corydon against Thyrsis. Still, I counted their sport above my work' (trans. Fairclough 1999, adapted).

[3] On *antiptosis* ('substitution of case') as *figura*, see Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum* 34.17: *quae figura dicitur antiptosis, quando casus pro casu ponitur*; and Servius, *in artem Donati* 4.416.16 Keil; Servius, *Aen.* 1.120 and others. That antiptosis is meant becomes clear by the additional scholion of Servius auctus (*et uidetur* [...] *'Corydonis' facit*). See Uhl 1998, p. 274.

also alludes to the *figura* of *allegoria*, which involves an allegorical reading of the 'literal' text surface and forms a frequently used interpretative tool in the exegetical tradition of Virgil's *Bucolics*.[4] In this case, the example sets the authors Cicero and Virgil parallel with Corydon and Thyrsis, the two shepherd-poets, who compete with poems in Virgil's *Eclogue* 7. The conclusion remains implicit but is nevertheless clear. In the poem, Corydon defeats Thyrsis, and in an analogous manner, Virgil defeats Cicero, if the reader continues the allegory inherent in Servius' example.[5] Thus, the example illustrates a reading of the poem according to which Virgil in *Ecl.* 7 describes himself competing with and winning over Cicero.

Beneath the surface of balance and pastoral politeness in the depicted scenes, both passages describe a rivalry between two authors, genres and literary fields that seem incomparable from the outset. Both remarks are highly symbolic and obviously reflect the relationship not only between two authors but between prose and poetry in general. The incidental, implicit way in which Servius twice invokes the motif suggests that the symbolic competition attached to the characters of Cicero and Virgil is not particularly new to his readers. As modern readers, however, we might be surprised that the competition takes place in the medium of poetry (Cicero speaks in verses in Servius, *Ecl.* 6.11; both authors are depicted as participants of a poetic contest in Servius, *Ecl.* 7.16) and that there are any points of comparison between Cicero and Virgil that make Cicero's defeat possible.

1.2. Macrobius. A Rhetorical Comparison

Only some years later, we find the comparison of Cicero and Virgil deployed in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, a fictive dialogue in seven

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[4] On *allegoria* as *figura*, see, e.g., Servius, *Ecl. pr.* p. 2.17–20 Thilo.

[5] Verg., *Ecl.* 7.69–70: *Haec memini, et uictum frustra contendere Thyrsin. / ex illo Corydon Corydon est tempore nobis*—'So much I remember, and how Thyrsis strove in vain against defeat. From that day, Corydon is the one and only Corydon for us' (trans. Fairclough 1999, adapted).—Servius, allowing allegories mainly for the topic of Virgil's loss of his villa, suppresses traditional allegories that thematise other topics or lets them appear only implicitly, as he does also in this note. On allegory in Servius and other commentators on Virgil, see Monno 2006 and Tischer 2006, p. 77–124.

books about all kinds of literary and antiquarian knowledge, seen from a Neoplatonic perspective. The fifth book of the *Saturnalia* begins with the following conversation:

> (1) *Post haec cum paulisper Eusebius quieuisset,* **omnes inter se consono murmure Vergilium non minus oratorem quam poetam habendum pronuntiabant,** *in quo et tanta orandi disciplina et tam diligens obseruatio rhetoricae artis ostenderetur.* (2) *et Auienus: 'dicas mihi' inquit, 'uolo, doctorum optime, si concedimus, sicuti necesse est, oratorem fuisse Vergilium,* **si quis nunc uelit orandi artem consequi, utrum magis ex Vergilio an ex Cicerone proficiat?'** (3) *'uideo quid agas', inquit Eusebius, 'quid intendas, quo me trahere coneris, eo scilicet quo minime uolo,* **ad comparationem Maronis et Tullii.** *uerecunde enim interrogasti* **uter eorum praestantior,** *quando quidem necessario is plurimum collaturus sit qui ipse plurimum praestat'* (Macr., *Sat.* 5.11–13).

> (1) After these remarks, when Eusebius had had a brief respite, all declared, with no murmur of dissent, that Virgil had to be considered no less an orator than a poet, seeing that he was shown to be so skilled in the ways of oratory and so keen a student of rhetoric. (2) And Avienus said [to the previous speaker, the rhetor Eusebius], 'Please tell me this, best of teachers: if we grant (as we must) that Virgil was an orator, would someone now aiming to become a skilled orator gain more from reading Virgil or Cicero?' (3) 'I see what you're up to', Eusebius said, 'I see where you're headed and where you're trying to drag me—to a place I don't at all want to go, a comparison of Maro and Tullius. You put circumspectly the question you really want answered—which of them is superior—since he will inevitably provide the greatest benefit who is himself the greatest' (trans. Kaster 2011b).

From the unanimous conclusion reached by the participants after Eusebius' speech, the point of comparison that Macrobius saw between Cicero and Virgil becomes clear. Their common field is rhetorical competence because 'Virgil is to be considered no less an orator than a poet', he 'who was shown to be so skilled in the ways of oratory and so keen a student of rhetoric'. It is this statement that prompts the young Avienus, one of the participants in the conversation, to ask the question about the comparison of Cicero and Virgil. However, Avienus does not want Eusebius to

compare aesthetic quality, talent and literary fame; he instead asks from the perspective of a student and with a very practical motivation: 'Would someone now aiming to become a skilled orator gain more from reading Virgil or Cicero?'. Eusebius, himself a teacher of rhetoric, is well aware that the question of comparison entails the need for ranking (*interrogasti uter eorum praestantior*—'you asked, which of them is superior').[6] His answer, although cautiously formulated and explained over several pages, is nevertheless clear: Cicero is a great master, but Virgil is the greater one and even excels the orators of the Greek past.[7]

Unlike Servius, Macrobius presents the comparison of Cicero and Virgil in the context of prose speech.[8] The rhetor Eusebius not only calls Virgil an orator, but analyses his verses according to rhetorical categories, compares them only to prose passages and at the end recommends the poet as the only one who is at home at all stylistic levels, whereas in his opinion Cicero and all other prose authors had only one style at their disposal. At the same time, there is a difference in the objective of the comparison. Macrobius is not only interested in who is 'better' (*uter eorum praestantior*?), but also in who is more useful. Thus, not simply poetry and prose are at issue, but also their value for the education of young Romans.

This question, however, is closely connected with interpretation and the correct ways of reading, as can be seen at the beginning of the *Saturnalia*, where the discussion about whether Virgil is an orator and whether he is a better orator than Cicero is first set in motion. The starting point is the mocking assertion of the critic Euangelus that Virgil had neither philosophical knowledge nor oratorical power.[9] This causes the host Symmachus to make an unusually sharp invective against all those who read Virgil the way Euangelus does:

> nec his Vergilii uerbis copia rerum dissonat, quam plerique omnes litteratores pedibus inlotis praetereunt, tamquam nihil ultra uerborum explanationem liceat nosse grammatico. ita sibi

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[6] Eusebius is called a teacher in Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.24.14 and 5.1.2: *doctorum optime*.

[7] Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.1.4–20.

[8] MacCormack 2013, p. 285–86.

[9] Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.24.10.

belli isti homines certos scientiae fines et uelut quaedam pome-
ria et effata posuerunt, ultra quae si quis egredi audeat, intro-
spexisse in aedem deae a qua mares absterrentur existimandus
sit (Macr., *Sat.* 1.24.12).

Nor does Virgil's abundant variety put the lie to his words
[from a letter to Augustus cited in advance, in which Virgil
speaks of his manifold studies], though practically all the
schoolteachers pass it by 'with unwashed feed', as though a
grammarian were allowed to know only how to parse. That's
how those fine fellows have fixed limits for research, like some
sort of sacred boundary that the augurs have defined, and if
anyone should dare set foot beyond it, he must be judged to
have peered into the shrine of the goddess from whom men
must keep far off (trans. Kaster 2011a, adapted).

Symmachus names the 'grammarians' (*grammatici*, 'schoolteach-
ers') as the targets of his criticism. They are accused of being small-
minded, presumptuous 'spellers' (*litteratores*), guarding knowledge
like a temple and treating other's glimpses into their area as sacri-
lege.[10] To oppose them and their method of reading, directly after
the quoted invective Macrobius' participants decide 'not to let this
sacred poem's inner sancta to be concealed' by demonstrating that
Virgil is the master of both rhetorical theory and rhetorical prac-
tice—and of many other fields of knowledge as well.[11]

Macrobius thus explicitly stages the study of Virgil's works and
the question of how to read the poet in a polemical context. This
polemic, which is directed against those who treat Virgil's verses
'as if they were like schoolboys answering the teacher', and who
see Virgil as 'not more than a poet', motivates the entire three-
day conversation of the *Saturnalia*.[12] Macrobius uses his criticism

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[10] On *litteratores* as a disrespectful term for *grammatici* (= interpreters and
teachers), see also Suetonius, *De grammaticis* 4.3 and Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*
16.6.1; 18.9.2.

[11] Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.24.13: *Sed nos quos crassa Minerua dedecet non patiamur*
abstrusa esse adyta sacri poematis sed arcanorum sensuum inuestigato aditu docto-
rum cultu celebranda praebeamus reclusa penetralia.—'But we should have a finer
understanding: let's not allow this sacred poem's inner sancta to be concealed, but
instead let's trace the path to its secret meanings and fling open its inmost shrine
so that it's available to the worship of the learned' (trans. Kaster 2011a).

[12] Cf. Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.24.5 and 10 and the *partitio* in *Sat.* 1.24.14–25. See
also recently Peirano Garrison 2019, esp. p. 219–43.

of the grammarians, as the traditional guardians of the Virgilian works, to propose his own and new kind of reading and interpreting the poet. As part of this enterprise, the participants also question another traditional paradigm, the Ciceronian prose speech, which represented the traditional model used to teach rhetoric to young Romans. From this perspective, the rivalry, which had been manifest in the comparison between Cicero and Virgil, appears as competition between prose and poetry, but also between the two disciplines that dealt with prose and poetry in Rome, rhetoric and grammar.

2. *The Elements of the Discussion*

The fact that such rivalries and interpretative claims in late antiquity could be expressed precisely in the comparison between Cicero and Virgil is based on a long history of reading and teaching literature in Rome. In the following, I shall try to briefly outline this history in order to better understand which cultural and literary preconditions made the comparison plausible in the eyes of contemporary readers. For this purpose, three motifs have to be considered: first, the changing perspectives on Cicero and Virgil and their relationship to other authors; next, the idea of Virgil as being (comparable to) an orator; and, lastly, the tradition of polemics against grammarians. For the sake of brevity, I discuss only a few of many possible examples.

2.1. Comparing Cicero, Comparing Virgil

The comparison of authors and texts is a traditional method of ancient literary criticism.[13] Cicero and Virgil are the subjects of comparison in various types of texts, and there have also been very early attempts to establish a relationship between them. In the beginning, however, the critics came to quite different conclusions than Servius and Macrobius.

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[13] Weiß 2017, p. 24–30; Focke 1923. A still useful collection for the comparison of Cicero and Virgil is Heyne & Lemaire 1822, VII, p. 363–69.

During their lifetime, both Cicero and Virgil were famous authors, who soon became classics after their death.[14] At the same time, they were both exposed to intense criticism, and we hear from our sources of *obtrectatores Ciceronis* no less than of *obtrectatores Vergili*.[15] At the beginnings of their reception, neither is considered perfect. Instead, they are seen as experts with complementary shortcomings—there was Cicero the perfect orator, who produced bad poems, and Virgil the congenial poet, who was not able to perform a prose speech.[16]

[14] Virgil was already read in schools in Augustan times, cf. Suetonius, *De grammaticis* 16.1–3; see Laurens 2018. Ovid's friend, the poet Cornelius Severus, describes Cicero as the epitome of Latin eloquence, cf. Cornelius Severus fr. 13.11–12 M. (*de morte Ciceronis*), cited in Seneca, *Suasoriae* 6.26: *abstulit una dies aeui decus, ictaque luctu / conticuit Latiae tristis facundia linguae.*—'One day took away the glory of an age, and struck by grief / The eloquence of the Latin tongue grew dumb with sadness' (trans. Winterbottom 1974). However, the popularity of Cicero's speeches initially declined and only increased significantly towards the end of the first century; on this point and Cicero's reception in general see La Bua 2019, esp. p. 100–25; Bishop 2015, esp. p. 289–91.

[15] Politically and perhaps also stylistically motivated criticism of Cicero comes primarily from the orator and historian Asinius Pollio and his son Asinius Gallus, cf. Seneca, *Suasoriae* 6.24–25 and Plinius, *Ep.* 7.4.3–4: *Legebantur in Laurentino mihi libri Asini Galli de comparatione patris et Ciceronis. [...] quod me ad scribendum sollicitauerat, his uersibus exaraui: Cum libros Galli legerem, quibus ille parenti / ausus de Cicerone dare est palmamque decusque, [...].*—'While I was staying in my house at Laurentum I had Asinius Gallus' works read aloud to me, in which he draws a comparison between his father and Cicero. [...] the very thought [...] inspired me to write. This was the result: "Reading the works of Gallus, where he ventures / To hand the palm of glory to his father, [...]"' (trans. Racine 1969). A prominent response received this criticism by the Emperor Claudius, cf. Suetonius, *Claudius* 41.3: *composuit [...] item 'Ciceronis defensionem aduersus Asini Galli libros' satis eruditam*—'a defence of Cicero against the writings of Asinius Gallus, a work of no little learning' (trans. Rolfe 1998). *obtrectatores Ciceronis* and criticism are also mentioned by Asconius Pedianus, *In toga candida* p. 84.4–8 Clark, Quintilianus, *Inst.* 11.1.17, and Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 17.1.—In the Neronian period, the famous critic Asconius Pedianus, who also composed a commentary on Cicero's speeches, opposed the *obtrectatores Vergili* in an entire treatise, cf. *Vita Don.* 43–46: *Obtrectatores Vergilio numquam defuerunt, nec mirum, nam nec Homero quidem. [...] Asconius Pedianus libro, quem contra obtrectatores Vergilii scripsit [...].*—'Virgil never wanted for detractors. And no wonder, for neither, in fact, did Homer. [...] In a book that he wrote as a response to Virgil's detractors, Asconius Pedianus [...]' (trans. Wilson-Okamura & Ziolkowsi in Ziolkowski & Putnam 2008). See Georgii 1893; Vallat 2012; Weiß 2017, p. 37–49.

[16] Since the late first century AD, Cicero has been regarded as an excellent orator but an extremely bad poet; along with Seneca, *Controversiae* 3 *pr.* 8, cf., e.g., Martialis 2.89.34; Iuvenalis 10.122–26; Quintilianus, *Inst.* 11.1.24; Tacitus, *Dial.* 18.4–6, see Bishop 2018. In Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.24.4, the critic Euangelus

The earliest testimony to such a juxtaposition, a remark of the orator Cassius Severus (early imperial period), which is handed down by the elder Seneca, illustrates this view:

> *Sed quaerenti mihi quare in declamationibus impar sibi esset, haec aiebat: Quod in me miraris, paene omnibus euenit. Magna quoque ingenia—a quibus multum abesse me scio—quando plus quam in uno eminuerunt opere?* **Ciceronem eloquentia sua in carminibus destituit; Vergilium illa felicitas ingenii in oratione soluta reliquit;** *orationes Sallustii in honorem historiarum leguntur; eloquentissimi uiri Platonis oratio, quae pro Socrate scripta est, nec patrono nec reo digna est* (Seneca, *Controversiae* 3 pr. 8).

> Now when I (Seneca) asked him (the orator Cassius Severus) why he was below his own standard in declamation, he replied: 'What surprises you in me happens to almost everybody. When has even great genius (not my category at all, I know) ever shown itself in more than one field? Cicero lost his eloquence when he wrote poetry; the felicity of Virgil's touch deserted him in prose; Sallust's speeches are read only as a compliment to the author of the Histories; the speech of the eloquent Plato written on behalf of Socrates is worthy neither of defender nor defendant (trans. Winterbottom 1974).

Cassius Severus uses the example of Cicero and Virgil to justify his own shortcomings, thereby stressing their imperfection. He does not see them as symbols for prose and poetry, but as representatives of different genres, as the parallel examples of Sallust and Plato demonstrate. Although he in both cases addresses speech and poetry, there seems to be no common field in which Cicero and Virgil can be compared. As a result, they form a contrast, but they do not compete.[17] The same applies to similar testimonies

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suggests that Cicero is a good speaker, but a bad philosopher.—Virgil, according to his contemporaries, failed as a speaker, and his speech seemed hesitant and unpolished to them, cf. *Vita Don.* 15–16: *egit et causam apud iudices unam omnino nec amplius quam semel: nam et in sermone tardissimum ac paene indocto similem fuisse Melissus tradidit.*—'He even argued a case before the judges, once and once only. For Melissus reported that [Virgil] was very slow in speaking and almost like someone who had not been schooled' (trans. Wilson-Okamura & Ziolkowsi in Ziolkowski & Putnam 2008).

   [17] Cicero and Virgil are seen in parallel or contrast without being in competition, e.g., in Plinius, *Naturalis historia pr.* 22; Seneca, *Ep.* 21.4–6; 128.24–34;

from the first century AD, which compare both authors to other representatives of their own genres, for instance, Cicero and Demosthenes or Virgil and Ennius or Homer, but not to each other.[18]

It was not until the beginning of the second century that for the first time we find a direct competition between Cicero and Virgil. In Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus*, the character Maternus, a successful orator, justifies his decision of leaving oratory for poetry with the following words:

> [...] *illud certe mihi concedes, Aper, non minorem honorem Homero quam Demostheni apud posteros, nec angustioribus terminis famam Euripidis aut Sophoclis quam Lysiae aut Hyperidis includi.* **pluris hodie reperies, qui Ciceronis gloriam quam qui Virgilii detrectent**: *nec ullus Asinii aut Messallae liber tam inlustris est quam Medea Ouidii aut Varii Thyestes* (Tacitus, *Dial.* 12.5–6).

> [...] you surely will admit, Aper, that Homer has been revered by after ages just as much as Demosthenes, and that the fame of Euripides or Sophocles is not confined to narrower limits than that of Lysias or Hyperides. And today you will find a larger number of critics ready to disparage Cicero's reputation than Virgil's; while there is no published oration of Asinius or Messalla so celebrated as the *Medea* of Ovid or the *Thyestes* of Varius (trans. Peterson 1914).

As an argument for his change of confessions, Maternus names several couples, each consisting of an author of prose speech and a

Martialis 5.56.3–5; 7.63.1–2; 11.48 (see Mindt 2013, p. 31–130), and Quintilianus, *Inst.* 12.11.26: *nam et poesis ab Homero et Vergilio tantum fastigium accepit et eloquentia a Demosthene atque Cicerone, denique quidquid est optimum ante non fuerat.*—'Poetry reached its great heights with Homer and Virgil, oratory with Demosthenes and Cicero; in a word, excellence is always something which had not been there before' (trans. Russell 2002b). In a list of respected authors in *Naturalis historia* 7.114–17, Pliny's praise of Cicero far surpasses all other authors, but there is no direct comparison.—The blunder of comparing Cicero directly to a poet is characteristically only committed by Petron's Trimalchio (Petronius, *Satyrica* 55), who finds Cicero *disertior* ('more eloquent') and Publilius Syrus, the composer of mimes, *honestior* ('more moral'), thus showing to have compared apples to oranges.

[18] Testimonies for comparison or parallels within the same genre cf., e.g., Columella, *De re rustica pr.* 30 (Cicero vs. Demosthenes and Plato); Martialis 5.10.7 (Virgil vs. Ennius); Iuvenalis 6.434–37 (Virgil vs. Homer); also Historia Augusta, *Hadrianus* 16 (Cicero vs. Cato; Virgil vs. Ennius). On Cicero, see Bishop 2015, p. 284–94, esp. p. 287; Keeline 2018, p. 93–101; on Virgil, Weiß 2017.

poet, in order to show that poetry is the more respected and successful field for literary activities. Unlike in the previous example of Cassius Severus, each name represents either prose or poetry, among them for the first time also Cicero and Virgil. This first direct comparison is embedded in a context of critique, polemics and rivalry because Maternus argues in a debate that is in general concerned with the value, utility and reputation of speech and poetry.[19] His point of comparison is the number of detractors, which is higher in the case of Cicero, a fact that implies a ranking in which Virgil comes first. Accordingly, Maternus opts for poetry in his speech—the former orator now declares himself a poet.[20]

2.2. Virgil as an Orator

From the comparison in Tacitus' *Dialogus*, Virgil emerged as the superior due to his greater reputation. This high reputation of the poet (and of poetry in general, as Maternus' speech had shown) is largely due to the fact that Virgil was studied very early as a canonical author in the schools of the grammarians. However, the grammarians' interest in reading poetry was not primarily literary but consisted above all in teaching correct Latin prose. The tradition of teaching and learning prose on the basis of poetry may have been one of the reasons why the idea of Virgil as an orator was able to develop. In Macrobius' account, this idea led directly to young Avienus' question of whether Cicero or Virgil were the better model for learning and to the comparison of both authors.

The interest of the orators and teachers of rhetoric, who were interested in Virgilian poetry very early, also played a role. Since Aristotle, we see that treatises and textbooks on rhetoric have, within certain limits, recommended poetic use and poetic lan-

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[19] Cf. Tacitus, *Dial.* 4; 5–10 (M. Aper *Pro eloquentia*) and 5–10; 11–13 (Curiatius Maternus *Pro poetica*).

[20] Tacitus, *Dial.* 11–13 and esp. 13.1: *licet illos certamina et pericula sua ad consulatus euexerint, malo securum et quietum Virgilii secessum, in quo tamen neque apud diuum Augustum gratia caruit neque apud populum Romanum notitia.*—'Even though in their case a consulship be the crown of all the contests and lawsuits they so dearly love: for my part I would rather have the seclusion in which Virgil lived, tranquil and serene, without forfeiting either the favour of the sainted Augustus, or popularity with the citizens of Rome' (trans. Peterson 1914 adapted). On the role of the comparison in Tacitus, see Powell 2011, p. 210–14.

guage for imitation, especially in relation to diction and imagery.[21] While Greek rhetoricians regarded Homer as the model par excellence, in Rome Virgil became the model for style and diction and was imitated both in poetry and in prose.[22] This did not mean, however, that Virgil himself was considered an orator.

This question was not addressed until the beginning of the second century AD, at about the time of Tacitus. A witness pointing in this direction is the introduction of a fragmentary dialogue, situated about AD 102 and titled with the question *Vergilius orator an poeta*? ('Is Virgil an orator or a poet?').[23] The dialogue is reported by a certain Florus, who describes himself as a poet discouraged by failure and now earning his living as a *grammaticus*, a teacher of literature. In the surviving passage, the question 'Is Virgil an orator or a poet?', which is suggested by the title, is not mentioned, and the answer must remain speculative. However, the fact that Florus felt the need to discuss the subject suggests that it was no longer impossible to regard Virgil as an orator. Another interesting point is the defence of the grammarians' profession in this fragment. Florus explains to his friend how annoying he found teaching for the first time:

> Fl. *'In reditu est mihi professio litterarum'*. B. *'O rem indignissimam! et quam aequo fers istud animo, sedere in sc[h]olis et pueris praecipere?' Ad quam illius interrogationem in hunc modum respondi: 'Non miror <te> eius nunc esse persuasionis, qua et ipse quoque aliquando laboraui. Toto enim quod egimus quinquennio ita [isto] mihi pertaesum erat huius professionis, ut nusquam uiuere putarem hominem miseriorem. Sed subinde retractanti sortemque meam cum fortunis et ceteris uitae laboribus conferenti tandem aliquando pulc[h]ritudo suscepti operis apparuit. [...]'* (Florus, *Verg.* 3).

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[21] On poetic diction in prose speech, see Garbarino 1978; on poetry and Virgil in the context of declamation and rhetorical education North 1952 and Comparetti 1885, p. 35–49.

[22] Homer is analysed as an orator, e.g., in the treatise Περὶ ἐσχηματισμένων of Ps.-Dion. Hal. (= Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ars rhetorica* 8–9), a view which is shared by Cicero, *Brutus* 40. See also Knudsen 2014, p. 135–55. An early example for the reception of a Virgilian expression both in poetry and in prose is Seneca, *Suasoriae* 3.4–7. On Virgil's early canonization, see Suerbaum 2012.

[23] On the fragment in general, see the introduction in Jal 1967 and Verweij 2015.

Fl. 'The literary profession gave me the financial resources to return'. B. 'Oh, shame! And how can you bear to sit in school and teach boys with equanimity?' I answered his question as follows: 'I am not surprised that you are of this opinion because I myself once grieved from it. For a whole five years, I hated this business so much that I thought no one could live more miserably. Later, however, when I thought about my fate and compared it with the other vicissitudes and troubles of life, I finally discovered the beautiful aspects of the task I had taken on'. [...] (trans. U.T.).

In the following, his answer bears witness to a quite self-confident personality. Florus is proud of his objects of study, of his moral responsibility for the education of young Romans, and not least of his status in relationship to pupils and texts, which he received from his profession.[24] In response to the friend's negative perception of the *professio litterarum*, he emphasises his own respectable position as a *grammaticus* in Roman social and cultural life. Moreover, as a grammarian and former poet, the speaker is portrayed as a kind of super-interpreter who knows poetry and its potential from both perspectives. Clearly, in Florus the debate about whether Virgil should be considered an orator or poet is situated in a similar context of scholarly reading as we have seen in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*. It is, as we have learned from Tacitus, a historical context in which poetry is considered as valuable as prose speech or as even more valuable. I therefore suppose Florus' lost answer to the question in the title to have been similar to Macrobius', namely that Virgil is 'not only a poet', but the master of both poetry and speech.[25] Furthermore, in defending Virgil as an orator in a school context, Florus may well have returned to the same argument of usefulness for learning prose speech that Macrobius uses. It is therefore not inconceivable that he also discussed the relationship between Virgil, the would-be-orator, and Cicero, the canonical representative of prose speech, but of course we cannot be sure about this. However, showing that Virgil is both a poet

[24] Florus, *Verg*. 3.7–8. The text breaks off, when the speaker starts praising the grammarian's tasks. On the *laus grammaticae* cf. Dahlmann 1970, esp. p. 261–65.

[25] Cf. Macrobius, *Sat*. 1.24.10. In addition, the order of the question *orator an poeta?* may be revealing for the assumed picture of Virgil primarily as an orator. See also the considerations of Rocchi 2020, p. 146–47.

and an orator would not only enhance the status of Virgil, but also the efforts of the person who teaches this noble subject. At the beginning of the second century, Florus seems to be in the position to make this claim because poetry, his subject, began to supersede prose as the leading cultural paradigm.

As we have seen, the idea that Virgil was (not only) a poet but (in particular) an orator developed with the practice of reading Virgil in order to teach correct prose speech. It found its most extreme expression in Tiberius Claudius Donatus, a contemporary of Macrobius.[26] Donatus starts the preface of his rhetorical commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*, written in the first third of the fifth century and entitled *Interpretationes Vergilianae*, with an invective against grammarians:

> [*Post*] *illos qui Mantuani uatis mihi carmina tradiderunt postque illos quorum libris uoluminum quae Aeneidos inscribuntur quasi quidam solus et purior intellectus expressus est silere melius fuit quam loquendo crimen adrogantis incurrere. sed cum aduerterem nihil magistros discipulis conferre quod sapiat, scriptores autem commentariorum non docendi studio sed memoriae suae causa quaedam fauorabili stilo, multa tamen inuoluta reliquisse, haec, fili carissime, tui causa conscripsi* [...] (Tib. Don. *pr.* p. 1.1–9 Georgii).

> After those who taught me the songs of the poet from Mantua, after those whose works express a virtually unique and pure understanding of the books entitled *The Aeneid*, it would have been better to remain silent than to incur the accusation of arrogance by speaking out. However, I noticed that the schoolmasters are not teaching their students anything sensible, and that the authors of commentaries are not driven by the desire to teach, but just to be remembered themselves, and while they have treated some themes felicitously, yet they have left many problems unresolved. Therefore, my dearest son, I have written this for you [...] (trans. Copeland & Sluiter 2009, p. 143).

Donatus interprets the *Aeneid* as an eulogy in praise of the Emperor Augustus whom he sees masked behind the character of

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[26] On Tiberius Claudius Donatus and the character of his Virgil commentary, see Pirovano 2006 and Vallat 2009.

Aeneas.[27] From his perspective, Virgil is not only the perfect orator (*summus orator*), but also a perfect rhetorician and teacher of rhetoric, from whom the reader can learn everything: [28]

> *Si Maronis carmina conpetenter attenderis et eorum mentem congrue conprehenderis, inuenies in poeta rhetorem summum atque inde intelleges Vergilium non grammaticos, sed oratores praecipuos tradere debuisse* (Tib. Don. *pr.* p. 4.24–28 Georgii).

> If you pay careful attention to the epic of Maro and grasp its meaning correctly, you will discover in the poet a perfect rhetor, and hence you will understand that Virgil should not have been taught by grammarians, but by the best of orators (trans. Copeland & Sluiter 2009, p. 145).

> *quo fit ut Vergiliani carminis lector rhetoricis praeceptis instrui possit et omnia uiuendi agendique officia reperire* (Tib. Don. *pr.* p. 6.15–17 Georgii).

> This is how the reader of Virgil's poetry can be instructed in the lessons of rhetoric and can find there all the duties of life and action (trans. Copeland & Sluiter 2009, p. 146).

Polemics and rhetorical reading are even more closely interlocked here than in Florus. In Donatus, like in Macrobius, the writing of the author's own work is motivated by the critique of the grammarians' treatment of Virgil, and again the question of correct interpretation is closely connected with the methods and contents of teaching. Donatus blames his competitors for only accepting their own interpretations and not addressing relevant issues.[29] Consequently, he even proposes to take Virgil out of the hands of the grammarians and to entrust the poet's treatment to the rhetoricians.[30] On this point, his argumentation is similar to that of the rhetorician Eusebius in Macrobius' dialogue—both 'create a poet

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[27] Tib. Don. *pr.* 2.7–25 Georgii.

[28] Tib. Don. *pr.* 3.8–14 Georgii.

[29] Tib. Don. *pr.* 1.3: quasi *quidam solus et purior intellectus* ('a virtually unique and pure understanding'); *pr.* 1.8: *multa tamen inuoluta reliquisse* ('they have left many problems unresolved').

[30] On Donatus' position within the discussion about the boundaries and legitimate domain of the language disciplines, see Starr 1992, p. 168; Copeland & Sluiter 2009, p. 141–42.

in their own image and make him resemble themselves'.[31] Cicero, the paradigm of rhetorical art, on the other hand, plays no role at all in Donatus' rhetorical commentary on Virgil.

2.3. Polemics against Grammarians and Their Way of Reading

In Macrobius, but also in Florus and Tiberius Claudius Donatus, the topic of reading Virgil also involved attacking and defending the role of the grammarians for teaching poetry. According to Macrobius and to Donatus, it is the grammarians who do not want to see Virgil's rhetorical qualities and insist on their own way of reading. This motif of the narrow-minded grammarian had been a common *topos* in literature since about the mid-first century AD. Since that time, the educative curriculum had been established in Rome, and with it the *grammatici* who functioned both as teachers and as exegetes of poetry. The grammar school represented the institutional place where reading was done, which led to the consequence that criticism of traditional and 'school reading' of poetry was very often formulated as invective against its representatives, the *grammatici*.[32]

The younger Seneca, for instance, provides an early example of such criticism of the institutionalised literary education, but one that is all the more sharply formulated. In a letter to Lucilius (written AD 62–65), he turns against the waste of time of what was called the *artes liberales*, epitomized by the grammarian:

> *Plus scire uelle quam sit satis intemperantiae genus est. Quid? Quod* **ista liberalium artium consectatio moestos, uerbosos, intempestiuos, sibi placentes facit et ideo non discentes necessaria quia superuacua didicerunt?** *Quattuor milia librorum* **Didymus grammaticus** *scripsit: miserer si tam multa superuacua legisset. In his libris de patria Homeri quaeritur, in his de Aeneae matre uera, in his libidinosior Anacreon an ebriosior uixerit, in his an Sappho publica fuerit, et alia quae erant dediscenda si scires. I nunc et longam esse uitam nega!* (Seneca, *Ep.* 88.37).

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[31] Sluiter 2013, p. 194.
[32] On grammar schools in Rome, see Bonner 1977, p. 47–64; on intellectual criticism of grammarians esp. in Late Antiquity Cardigni 2013, p. 130–37.

This desire to know more than is sufficient is a sort of intemperance. Why? Because this unseemly pursuit of the liberal arts makes men troublesome, wordy, tactless, self-satisfied bores, who fail to learn the essentials just because they have learned the non-essentials. Didymus the grammarian wrote four thousand books. I should feel pity for him if he had only read the same number of superfluous volumes. In these books he investigates Homer's birthplace, who was really the mother of Aeneas, whether Anacreon was more of a rake or more of a drunkard, whether Sappho was a bad lot, and other problems the answers to which, if found, were forthwith to be forgotten. Come now, do not tell me that life is long! (trans. Gummere 2014).

The grammarians are blamed here for things quite similar to Macrobius' polemics. Seneca describes them as garrulous know-it-alls, as maltreating the poets with absurd and superfluous questions, thereby producing and teaching useless pseudo-knowledge. 'Superfluous', in Seneca's opinion, are in particular discussions about antiquarian issues and about details of myth or plot. Other testimonies criticized the grammarians' exaggerated attention to linguistic or etymological problems.[33]

From the first century onwards, in our sources we also encounter the type of the arrogant grammarian. Vivid examples of arrogance paired with ignorance are depicted in the *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius (second half of the second century), as the following scene may show:

'Ex iure manum consertum' uerba sunt ex antiquis actionibus, quae, cum lege agitur et uindiciae contenduntur, dici nunc quoque apud praetorem solent. Rogaui ego Romae grammaticum, celebri hominem fama et multo nomine, quid haec uerba

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[33] Cf., e.g., Plinius, *Naturalis historia* 35.13.4: [...] *non, ut peruersa grammaticorum suptilitas uoluit* [...]—'not, as the misguided ingenuity of scholars has made out' (trans. U.T.) and Quintilian's warning in *Inst.* 1.7.33–34: *nec ipse ad extremam usque anxietatem et ineptas cauillationes descendendum atque his ingenia concidi et comminui credo. Sed nihil ex grammatice nocuerit nisi quod superuacuum est*—'Nor do I myself think that one should descend into extreme meticulousness and foolish quibbling: natural talents, I think, are damaged and destroyed by this. But there is not much harm in *grammatice*, except in its superfluous parts' (trans. Russell 2002a). See Bonner 1977, p. 227–49 on the grammarian's typical subject matter and its critics.

essent? **Tum ille me despiciens 'aut erras', inquit 'adulescens, aut ludis; rem enim doceo grammaticam, non ius respondeo; si quid igitur ex Vergilio, Plauto, Ennio quaerere habes, quaeras licet'** (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 20.10.1–2).

Ex iure manum consertum, or 'lay on hands according to law', is a phrase taken from ancient cases at law, and commonly used to-day when a case is tried before the praetor and claims are made. I asked a Roman grammarian, a man of wide reputation and great name, what the meaning of these words was. But he, looking scornfully at me, said: 'Either you are making a mistake, youngster, or you are jesting; for I teach grammar and do not give legal advice. If you want to know anything connected with Virgil, Plautus or Ennius, you may ask me' (trans. Rolfe 1927).

This fellow gives the impression of expertise but limits his responsibility and the area of necessary and valuable knowledge to a small section. At the same time, he treats the questioner condescendingly and as if he were a schoolboy. If we look at critical sources like Seneca and Gellius, there is often a close connection between interpretation, teaching and authority. According to them, grammarians ask the wrong questions, teach the wrong things and claim unjustified authority. On the other hand, the critics themselves often suggest their own new readings, just as Macrobius does. The greatest density of such invectives can be found from the middle of the first to the middle of the second century, the time when Tacitus and Florus discussed Virgil's reputation and his rhetorical qualities.

3. Conclusions

The comparison of Virgil and Cicero was made from the point of view of fame, quality and utility and used for a variety of purposes. At the beginning, the comparison motif stood for a dispute over a cultural paradigm, namely the question of whether prose or poetry should be seen as the standard model for teaching language and literature. This debate, however, had long since been settled at the beginning of the fifth century. As early as the second century, the relationship between Cicero and Virgil began to change in the eyes of readers from mutual complementarity to competi-

tion, as the testimony of Tacitus has shown. Since that time, the poet Virgil has defeated the orator Cicero. This has been accompanied by an increasing emphasis on poetry—and especially Virgil's poems—as an instrument for teaching and learning. Accordingly, neither Servius nor Macrobius, the two authors who employ the motif in late antiquity, question Virgil's superiority over Cicero.

However, the real issue behind the discussion in our sources is the interpretive control over Virgil's works. The possible positions are reflected in the field in which Virgil wins the competition and in the interpreter's role assigned to him. Servius puts the praise of Virgil into the mouth of the orator Cicero and he stages comparison and competition in the field of poetry. As poetry is the traditional subject of the grammarian, Virgil's superiority reflects the importance of Servius' own task as a teacher and interpreter. A possible predecessor of this opinion could have been Florus, whose dialogue character, the *poeta grammaticus* Florus, gains his self-confidence from the high value of the literary subjects he teaches. Both Florus and Servius were in a privileged position as interpreters because as grammarians they represented exactly the institution where poetry in Rome was traditionally taught. From their point of view, praising Virgil means defending their own traditional position. In the case of Servius, this could have been the reason why the competition between orator and poet was evoked implicitly and only on a symbolic level.

The situation is different in the case of Macrobius and also of Tiberius Claudius Donatus. Both authors have Virgil crossing the traditional sphere, transforming him from poet into orator and even philosopher. From this point of view, Virgil, who surpasses Cicero in rhetoric, is a provocative exaggeration of the traditional motif. Accordingly, Macrobius and Donatus present their reading of Virgil as something new, as an opening of the text and an uncovering of hidden truth, and they demand to broaden the circle of those who are empowered to interpret and teach Virgil. Thus, both enter into competition with the traditional guardians of poetry, which explains their sharp invective against the methods and the authority of the grammarians.[34] Part of this polemic is the cliché of the narrow-minded grammarian who anxiously watches

[34] Pelttari 2014, p. 25–43.

over his territory. It is not new and has been used much earlier to enforce competing claims in the area of exegesis and teaching, as we have seen from the examples of Seneca and Aulus Gellius. Macrobius and Donatus take it as a dummy, which they expose in order to show their own position more clearly. It downplays the actual role and authority of the *grammaticus* in the fifth century, and if we are looking for a more realistic picture, we should, for example, have a look at the Servian commentaries and their contemporary reception.

The polemics Macrobius uses also conceals that the distance between himself and the criticised grammarians is much less than he wants to let us know. It is no coincidence that one of the participants of the *Saturnalia* is no other than Servius himself, who figures as a respectful but highly competent expert on Virgilian questions.[35] At the same time, the participants discuss abundant amounts of material from the common exegetical tradition. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Macrobius too was a commentator who wrote, among other things, a commentary on Cicero's *De re publica*.[36] This also holds true for Tiberius Claudius Donatus and his rhetorical commentary on the *Aeneid*. After having attacked the commentators in his preface for their arrogance and incompleteness, he points out to his son that he does not want to override, but only to supplement the traditional way of reading. Thus, his suggestion to place the study of Virgil from the hands of the grammarians into those of the rhetoricians must be seen more as a rhetorical punch line than as a realistic demand.

This brings me to my conclusion and final point. The comparison of Cicero and Virgil in late antiquity symbolised a competition not (only) between prose and poetry, but between different ways of reading Virgil. This was an area to win a great social and cultural reputation. Philosophers and rhetoricians challenged the traditional authorities, trying to establish their own exegetical authority on the poet. However, if we take the reception of the Servian commentaries during the Middle ages and the Renaissance as symptomatic, the grammarian is always one step ahead.

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[35] On Servius and 'Servius' in Macrobius, see Kaster 1980.
[36] On Macrobius as a commentator, see Cardigni 2013.

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Abstract

At the beginning of the fifth century there are a number of testimonies that place Cicero and Virgil in a competitive relationship and at the same time reflect a polemical debate between rival interpreters of poetry. Central issues in this debate are the reputation of poetry and prose both as literary genres and as subjects of instruction, the 'correct' reading of poetry and of Virgil in particular, and the question of who is competent and authorised to interpret and teach Virgil's works.

The fact that such rivalries and interpretative claims in late antiquity could be expressed precisely in the comparison between Cicero and Virgil is based on a long history of reading and teaching literature in Rome. In this article, I shall outline this history in order to better understand which cultural and literary preconditions made the comparison plausible in the eyes of contemporary readers. To this end, I trace the development of three motifs, viz. the changing perspectives on Cicero and Virgil and their relationship to other authors, the idea of Virgil as being (comparable to) an orator and the tradition of polemics against grammarians. The paper concludes with some reflections on the rhetorical function and possible intentions for the use of the comparison motif.

JOSHUA M. SMITH

(MIS)READING THE POET

A NETWORKING STRATEGY
IN ANCIENT CRITICISM

In macrocosmic analyses of Greek literature, it has become conventional to attach a sense of belatedness to the Hellenistic era, which is imagined to have cast a wistful backward glance to earlier periods of literary efflorescence.[1] According to this narrative, which aligns generally with the larger Bloomian thesis on anxieties of influence, post-Classical authors recognized the daunting challenge of matching the achievements of their predecessors, as when the Homeric Diomedes hopes desperately to live up to the towering reputation of his father Tydeus, only to hear Athena's chiding: 'Certainly Tydeus bore a son precious little like himself'![2] This perceived insufficiency is correlated with a general perception of older material as superior in quality and originality, as well as with the way in which the burgeoning library systems of Hellenistic *poleis*—and the growth of a written textuality more broadly—contributed to the canonization of certain authors as 'selected'.[3] This sense of belatedness found expression in, among other things, the Callimachean preference for the untrodden path instead of the well-worn highway, made famous above all by the

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[1] For discussion, including some suggested qualifications of the term and its usage, see, e.g., Whitmarsh 2001, p. 44–45, 59, with notes; Fantuzzi & Hunter 2005, p. vii, 461–62; Bing 2008, passim; Acosta-Hughes 2010, p. 91; Burgess 2012, p. 269; Berrey 2017, p. 133, 164.

[2] ἦ ὀλίγον οἷ παῖδα ἐοικότα γείνατο Τυδεύς (*Iliad* 5.800).

[3] See Pfeiffer 1968, p. 206–08 on the categorization of 'selected' authors (ἐγκριθέντες). For its part, Aristotelian literary criticism may be seen as a contributor to this development insofar as the teleological approach of the *Poetics* establishes a closed order of authors and works in the genres of epic and tragedy (see Pfeiffer 1968, p. 68–69).

Aetia Prologue (vv. 25–28). Of course, it is scarcely credible that such feelings of belatedness deserve to be characterized as a unique feature of Hellenistic literature, and critics have pointed out how even the very sequestration of 'Hellenistic literature' as a distinct category has unfairly contributed to its labelling as derivative or artificial.[4] Nevertheless, authors from what we traditionally mark as the Hellenistic period do sometimes show, or at least pretend to show in a certain literary posture, a weight of anxiety in the presence of their literary predecessors. The task before these authors was to associate with an elite group while writing from the outside and thus to infiltrate a closed intellectual circle—or at least one that was closing very quickly.

If feelings of belatedness are appropriately ascribed to the literature of the Hellenistic period (with the caveats suggested above), then the same may be said of the literary criticism that emerged in that era, for at least two reasons. First, criticism is inherently 'belated' as a delayed response to a preceding literary artifact. For all its intention to create a kind of dialogue with that artifact, and (as in the case of commentary especially) for all its potential juxtaposition to that artifact, either in a companion volume or even in the very margins of the primary text, criticism, whether Hellenistic or otherwise, can never escape its 'afterness' vis-à-vis the literature with which it engages.[5] Second, the very energies that Hellenistic criticism devoted to collecting, editing, reading, and annotating works of literature necessarily conceded to those works a certain elevation in status and further solidified their position in the canon, effectively guaranteeing that those works were worthy of the efforts exhausted on their behalf. And, of course, the scholarly apparatus that was so painstakingly constructed around the 'selected' authors in the form of editions, lexica, and com-

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[4] See especially Acosta-Hughes 2010, who questions the validity of 'Hellenistic literature' as a category (p. 82) and who shows how the various 'calling cards' of the era actually appear in similar form in other eras; note in particular the lament of Choerilus of Samos (fifth century BC) that no path of epic originality lay open to the authors of his day, a sentiment typically associated with Hellenistic responses to the Greek literature of the archaic and classical periods (p. 86).

[5] Bing 2008, p. 76 presents a useful formulation of this problem with respect to literary quotation, a practice that creates a diachronic union in the form of a 'visible seam between present and past', while the transplanted text still remains to a degree 'fundamentally alien' in its adopted context.

mentaries would facilitate their reading and study by later genera-
tions, further reinforcing their canonical status. To be sure, the
relationship was symbiotic to an extent: if poets were validated by
the devotion of their critics, those critics in turn gained from the
prestige of their subjects by becoming the best interpreters of the
most frequently read poets. In this way, the reputation of literary
critics would always be closely tied to that of the corpora to which
they turned their exegetical eye. In the grand scheme of things,
however, criticism could scarcely keep from calling attention to
its own distinctness from and subordination to the canon itself.[6]

Belatedness, then, may threaten poet and critic alike, and, if
Hellenistic and later poets generated techniques to address their
situatedness, we may also wonder to what extent literary critics per-
ceived and responded to such feelings. It must be said at the outset
that, as far as I know, our source material does not contain explicit
attestations that a sense of belatedness drove ancient scholars to
execute their work in a particular way. Even though critics and
commentators were certainly aware of the chronological distance
between themselves and their subjects, this knowledge does not
imply *a priori* any degree of anxiety as a major determinative fac-
tor in how their scholarship took shape. Further, if such thoughts
were entertained, it is in any case generally true that ancient liter-
ary criticism—especially that found in the commentary format—
tends not to disclose its underlying theoretical motivations in the
first place. At the same time, certain aspects of ancient criticism
appear to be aimed at 'closing a gap' between past and present, and
my goal in the present study is to explore a technique that, in my
mind, appears to function in this way: an oft-recurring mode of
polemical discourse in which post-classical scholars accuse canon-
ical Greek poets of misreading Homer.[7] If scholars stood at some

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[6] The issue is complicated somewhat by the occasional blurring, or even
obliteration, of the boundary between 'poet' and 'critic', especially for the Alex-
andrians; see especially Pfeiffer 1968 in regard to Philitas (p. 89) and Callimachus
(p. 124). Distinguishing between different types of belatedness, therefore, may
not always be appropriate, although it is at least true that the functions of criti-
cism *per se* are necessarily subject to the aforementioned principles insofar as they
are by nature responses to a preceding literary entity.

[7] The theme of 'misreading' will rightly ring a Bloomian bell in my discussion
of the anxieties stemming from belatedness, and this requires some qualification.
For my purposes, accusations of 'misreading' will refer exclusively to what Bloom

remove from the poets whose works they studied, they also recognized that a kind of diachronic network could be forged with so many of those poets along one simple line of correlation: they all shared common ground as readers of Homer, a status assumed for anyone with an education in Greek literature.[8] Furthermore, since it was taken for granted that those poets always composed with an eye to Homer and that they were constantly engaging with his work through imitation, parody, or other modes of response, later scholars were in a position to use their own deep experience of Homer to critique that literary engagement. All had equal opportunity to respond to 'the Poet'—as he was so often called—and all could have those responses questioned by Homer's other readers. In this way, scholars could incorporate themselves into a virtual literary network at the highest intellectual level.

The Hellenistic library, and above all that at Alexandria, was an ideal place for this kind of diachronic networking, the library itself forming a reified network of literati, living and dead. Importantly, this dialogic space was notorious for its polemical discourse, described most notably by Timon of Phlius as the squabbling 'birdcage of the Muses'.[9] But Timon's dictum functions more broadly than even he seems to have intended. Through the library's collection of voices past and present, polemical discourse could extend not only to its contemporary scholars, but also to the very authors who populated its shelves. The medium of writing invited into the birdcage avian ghosts from eras long gone. While we are missing so much direct evidence of the polemics Timon described, we can nonetheless find some of its echoes lingering within the ancient commentary tradition, as revealed

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called a 'weak' misreading, that is, an actual mistake in interpretation. I am not referring to 'strong' misreading or 'misprision', by which a later author deliberately refigures a predecessor's work as part of a defensive posture against belatedness. In fact, as some of the forthcoming examples show, it was often a matter of scholarly debate whether any particular point of divergence from Homer constituted a deliberate choice or a mistake, a remix or simply a missed beat, but in the present study I am concerned only with allegations of 'weak' misreading.

[8] For some comments on Homer's centrality in literary education, see Hunter 2018, p. 4, 15–16, 166–67.

[9] *Supplementum Hellenisticum* fr. 786 (= Athenaeus 1.22d); see also Cameron 1995, p. 32 for a rebuttal of the idea that Timon's comment is suggestive of isolationism in the library instead of polemicism alone.

by the plentiful disagreements and name-calling in our extant scholia. It is here that I will focus my search for accusations of Homeric misreading, and, although there are numerous examples of the phenomenon throughout the scholia, I will limit my discussion to a few critiques levelled against Euripides, Pindar, and Hesiod.[10] The decision to ground my search in the scholia is not without its own problems, most obviously because the convoluted nature of commentary transmission significantly occludes a clear historical assessment of the individual notes, with only a few of the pertinent examples being associated with known scholars of the Hellenistic and Roman eras, and even then there is no guarantee that a given scholar's judgment has been accurately reported.[11] For this reason, my investigation will attempt to show only that accusations of Homeric misreading constitute a distinct thread running through the fabric of the commentary tradition in the *longue durée*. There is in any case the consolation that, while the chronological imprecision of my assessment may be disappointing, it is not altogether inappropriate, for the very technique I am exploring is one that collapses time by pulling all post-Homeric scholars and authors into a common literary circle. We can therefore appreciate, at least, how the erasure of time effected by the commentary tradition can serve its own rhetorical purposes.[12]

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Contrary to the advice found in every manual on Greek composition, I begin with an enclitic: the singular accusative pronoun νιν. In the prologue to Euripides' *Andromache*, the wife of the slain

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[10]   For the sake of space, I have focused on the scholia to each of these authors, but it should also be noted that the same technique is used with similar rhetorical outcome in the Homeric scholia, which sometimes mention how this or that passage has been misread by other authors. On occasion, the scholia to both Homer and the other author will even contain similar assertions about the same passages.

[11]   See the remarks of Montanari 2016, p. 79–80 and Tosi 1988 on difficulties in the attribution of citations. For general problems in understanding the formation of scholiastic corpora, see, e.g., Dickey 2007, p. 11–14; Wilson 2007; Montana 2011; Ercoles 2014, p. 90–91.

[12]   All translations below are my own. For the Greek text of the scholia, I have listed the pertinent edition at the first citation from each volume, and all references to specific manuscripts containing scholia will use the labels appropriate to their respective editions. See the Bibliography for fuller references.

Hector describes her new home, now that she has been enslaved
following the sack of Troy (vv. 16–20):

> Φθίας δὲ τῆσδε καὶ πόλεως Φαρσαλίας
> σύγχορτα ναίω πεδί’, ἵν’ ἡ θαλασσία
> Πηλεῖ ξυνώικει χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων Θέτις
> φεύγουσ’ ὅμιλον· Θεσσαλὸς δέ νιν λεὼς
> Θετίδειον αὐδᾶι θεᾶς χάριν νυμφευμάτων.

> And I dwell in the plains [πεδία] adjacent to this land of
>   Phthia
> and the city of Pharsalia, where the sea-goddess Thetis
> lived together with Peleus apart from mortals,
> shunning their company. And the Thessalian people
> call it [νιν] 'Thetideion' on account of the nuptials of the
>   goddess.

The use of the singular νιν ('it') as a pronoun referring to the plural
πεδία ('plains') is technically speaking an instance of grammati-
cal disagreement: rather than strictly matching the number of its
antecedent, νιν instead looks forward to the identification of the
plains as a singular locality under the name of 'Thetideion'. At
least some ancient readers of Euripides recognized the disjunction
and explained it as a Homeric phenomenon:

> Ὁμηρικὴ δὲ ἡ σύνταξις· ‘τὰ δὲ δώματα κάλ’ Ὀδυσῆος [...] οὐκ
> ἄν τίς μιν ἀνὴρ ὑπεροπλίσσαιτο’. καὶ ὁ μὲν ποιητὴς πρὸς τὸ
> σημαινόμενον ἀπέδωκεν ἀντὶ τοῦ αὐτὸ τὸ οἴκημα, οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι
> οἰηθέντες τὸν Ὅμηρον κατὰ πληθυντικοῦ τῶν δωμάτων συντάξαι
> τὴν μιν, καὶ αὐτοὶ οὕτως συνέταξαν· ‘τοιγάρ νιν αὐτὰς [...]
> ἐξέμηνα’ κατὰ πληθυντικοῦ. ἔστιν οὖν ἀπάτη νεωτέρων.

> And the syntax is Homeric: 'And the lovely halls [δώματα]
> of Odysseus [...] not any man would vanquish it [μιν]' [Odys-
> sey 17.264–68]. And the Poet rendered μιν by sense, stand-
> ing for the singular home itself [οἴκημα]. But the more
> recent authors, since they think that Homer used μιν in the
> plural with δώματα, also use it this way themselves. 'And so
> I drove [...] the women themselves mad' [νιν αὐτάς, Bacchae
> 36] in the plural. It is therefore a delusion of the more recent
> authors.[13]

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[13] Σ Andromache 17 (ed. Schwartz).

That is, the technical discrepancy between Homer's singular μιν and the plural δώματα runs parallel to that between Euripides' νιν and πεδία: both authors use νιν (or its equivalent μιν) in reference to a noun that is plural in form but singular in meaning ('plains' = 'place', 'halls' = 'home')—that is, they treat the noun as singular 'according to sense' (πρὸς τὸ σημαινομένον). As this scholion implies and as another nearby scholion makes explicit, this parallelism was assumed to be deliberate, as Euripides is said to have imitated the Homeric configuration from *Odyssey* 17 (Ὁμηρικὸς ζῆλος, MS O). So then at this point Euripides appears to have copied the Homeric model accurately, hence the resolution of the apparent grammatical discrepancy. But did he actually understand the nuance of the Homeric usage? The commentator probes further with the help of a cross-reference to *Bacchae* 36, where Euripides pairs νιν with the plural pronoun αὐτάς and hence unambiguously requires it to mean 'them'.[14] In light of this additional evidence, the commentator determines that the correlation between the passages from the *Andromache* and the *Odyssey* is only superficial, that Euripides did *not* apply the enclitic pronoun to fit the singular sense of the antecedent in Homeric fashion, but rather incorrectly accepted it as a *bona fide* plural in its own right—a true misreading of Homer. Framed in this way, the

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[14] As with many aspects of ancient commentaries, the question of how much support any single interpretation had among ancient readers is often quite uncertain. Unless we are told explicitly that a given idea is accepted by 'some' or 'many', we have no guarantee that the interpretation is anything other than the idiosyncrasy of a single scholar. On the other hand, my reference to a singular 'commentator' for any example included in this study should not be taken to imply that the viewpoint expressed was limited to one reader's interpretation. Assessing an idea's support by the number of its recurrences in extant texts offers only limited help in this problem. Exegetical works on papyri, while common enough to constitute a valuable source of information on ancient reading (see above all McNamee 2007), are rare enough to make quite frail the hope of finding independent but corresponding comments on the same text. Further, in the Byzantine tradition the recurrence of a given scholion across numerous manuscripts may well indicate some degree of widespread acceptance, but there is no guarantee that the recording of a particular view means wholesale adoption of it as a valid interpretation; indeed, many opinions recorded in the scholia are explicitly marked as incorrect, such that mere inclusion need not imply acceptance. On the other hand, if it remains difficult to assess the popularity of a *single* instance of interpretation, the vast corpora of ancient scholia often give plentiful opportunity for tracking the popularity of certain scholarly methods in the grand scheme, and it is on this kind of analysis that the current project relies.

discussion posits the commentator and the tragedian as literary peers in that both have access to the Homeric poems and a desire to interpret them correctly. The difference emerges in that the commentator sees the true nature of Homeric syntax and is therefore able to correct the 'delusion' (ἀπάτη) of Homer's other readers, who in this case happen to be exceptionally famous authors in their own right.

As the *Andromache* scholion suggests, other *neoteroi* were also found guilty of this pronominal error.[15] Among these was Pindar, whose *Nemean* 4 begins as follows: 'Good cheer is the best physician when labours are decided, and songs, skilful daughters of the Muses, ease it/ them [νιν] with their touch'.[16] The scholia reveal a disagreement over the antecedent of νιν, and hence the interpretation of the passage:

> τὸ νιν Ἀρίσταρχος ἐπὶ τῆς εὐφροσύνης ἀκούει, ὥστε εἶναι τὸν λόγον· αἱ δὲ τῶν Μουσῶν θυγατέρες ᾠδαί, τουτέστι τὰ ποιήματα, ἁπτόμεναι αὐτὴν, τὴν εὐφροσύνην, ἔθελξαν, τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὅταν ἐγκωμιάζηται. ἔστι δὲ ἄκυρον· πῶς γὰρ θέλγεται ἡ εὐφροσύνη, αὐτὴ θέλγουσα τοὺς νενικηκότας, οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλου θελγομένη; ἄμεινον δέ, φησὶν ὁ Δίδυμος, ἐπὶ τῶν πόνων ἀκούειν τὴν νίν· οἱ γὰρ μεθ' Ὅμηρον οὐκ ἀκριβεύουσι τὴν ἀντωνυμίαν. καθὼς καὶ Εὐριπίδης· 'τοιγάρ νιν αὐτὰς ἐκ δόμων οἴστρησ' ἐγώ'. ὥστε τὸν λόγον εἶναι τοιοῦτον· αἱ ᾠδαὶ ἔθελξαν αὐτοὺς, τοὺς πόνους, ἁπτόμεναι αὐτῶν καὶ μαλάσσουσαι· οἷον θέλγουσι τὴν κακοπάθειαν ὑμνοῦσαι αἱ ᾠδαί.

> Aristarchus understands νιν in reference to 'good cheer', such that the phrase means: 'And the daughters of the Muses, songs (that is, poems), touching it (that is, good cheer) soothe it, namely the good cheer of a man when he is praised'. But this is incorrect. For how is good cheer soothed, it itself soothing the victors and not being soothed by another? But it is better, Didymus says, to understand νιν in reference to the toils, for those after Homer do not use the pronoun precisely. In the same way, Euripides also says: 'And so I, goading the women

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[15] The term *neoteroi* is various employed in ancient scholarship (see, e.g., Whitmarsh 2001, p. 26 and Nünlist 2009, p. 14, 258). Here it is probably intended as an equivalent to 'those after Homer' (οἱ μεθ' Ὅμηρον). While Hesiod is sometimes regarded as contemporary with Homer (see below, n. 20), even he is sometimes lumped in with the group (see, e.g., Strabo 7.3.6).

[16] Ἄριστος εὐφροσύνα πόνων κεκριμένων / ἰατρός αἱ δὲ σοφαί / Μοισᾶν θύγατρες ἀοιδαὶ θέλξαν μιν ἁπτόμεναι (ed. Bowra).

themselves out of their homes'. So the meaning is like this: 'Songs charm them (the toils), touching and softening them'. That is, songs soothe suffering by memorializing it.[17]

The rationale behind Aristarchus' reading of νιν is left unstated. If, like the Euripidean commentator above, he took Homer's μιν at *Odyssey* 17.268 to refer to the singular sense of δώματα as 'house' (= οἴκημα), he may also have demanded a singular Pindaric νιν on the assumption that the lyric poet would not have broken step with Homer, and in this case the only available antecedent was 'good cheer' (εὐφροσύνα).[18] What is clear is that, regardless of whether Aristarchus invoked Homer on this particular question, Didymus used the principle of Homeric misreading to make his counter-argument that the *Nemean* νιν should be read as plural. The form of that argument is harshly compressed by the Pindaric note but nonetheless becomes perfectly clear in light of the *Andromache* scholion: Homer used the pronoun precisely (viz., as singular), but 'those after Homer'—a substitute title for *neoteroi*—misunderstood his language and consequently used νιν as a plural. If the Pindaric commentator makes no mention of the specific role of *Odyssey* 17.268 in tripping up those later authors, the recurrence of the *Bacchae* 36 citation as a corresponding example of 'neoteric' error suggests strongly that the Pindaric and Euripidean scholia should be considered together, and that in all likelihood Didy-

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[17] Σ *Nemean* 4.1 (ed. Drachmann). For some general discussion of criticisms of Pindar, including the use of Homer for that purpose, see Cannatà Fera 2018 and Calvani Mariotti 1987. For a modern discussion of the passage at hand, see the commentary of Henry 2005, p. 28.

[18] Aristarchus' opinion on the use of μιν at *Odyssey* 17.268 is not recorded by the Homeric scholia, although an anonymous scholion in MS H (ed. Dindorf) glosses μιν as a singular ('the house itself', αὐτὸ τὸ δῶμα), and this could well have been Aristarchus' thought on the matter. Supporting this stance is an Aristonican scholion to *Iliad* 10.127, which probably indicates an Aristarchean position: here Zenodotus' choice to keep μιν in the text is rejected on the ground that the text requires a plural pronoun and must instead be written as σφιν (compare the similar but abridged statement at Σ *Iliad* 1.73; on these texts, see Matthaios 1999, p. 463–64 and Schironi 2018, p. 554–55). If Aristarchus refused to allow a plural μιν in this passage, he would probably also require the μιν of *Odyssey* 17.264 to be taken in reference to the singular sense of δώματα. It may also be worth noting that the exegetical T scholia to *Iliad* 4.110 cite the *Odyssey* passage as a parallel example of a plural noun with a singular sense. At some point the question of singular vs. plural μιν became a scholarly *topos* and is evident in the early grammarians (see, e.g., the work attributed to Apollonius Dyscolus 2.1.1.84 [ed. Schneider]).

mus will have referred to that same Homeric passage as the *raison d'être* of plural νιν in *Nemean* 4.[19] Furthermore, given the prolific imprint left by Didymus on the Euripidean scholia at large, it is reasonable to guess that he himself lies behind the anonymous *Andromache* comment.[20] However that may be, the Pindaric scholion shows how arguing from the principle that more recent authors sometimes get their Homer wrong could allow Didymus to provide a more readily sensible interpretation of the lyric passage, where songs soothe 'toils' instead of 'good cheer'.

Canonical poets were also accused of more substantive missteps. At *Theogony* 746–48, Hesiod portrays Atlas standing at the ends of the earth and firmly holding up the wide heaven with his head and hands.[21] The image puzzled some ancient readers, given that Hesiod had just previously described an enormous distance between heaven and earth—a nine-day free-fall for a bronze anvil—meaning that only an absurdly tall Atlas could stand on earth and still hold heaven aloft.[22] How to explain such a monstrosity? One or more commentators again turned to the technique of Homeric misreading:

> μαχόμενα τὰ ἐπὶ τῷ Ἄτλαντι. εἰ γὰρ ἐννέα ἡμερῶν διάστημα ὁ ἄκμων καταβαίνει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πῶς οἷόν τε τὸν Ἄτλαντα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἑστῶτα βαστάζειν τὸν οὐρανόν; Ὁμήρου εἰπόντος· 'ἔχει δέ τε κίονας αὐτός' ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐπιμελείας ἀξιοῖ ἢ φυλάττει, ὡς καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ 'καί μοι κῆπον ἔχει πολυδένδρεον', ὁ δὲ Ἡσίοδος ἀντὶ τοῦ κατέχει καὶ φέρει ἤκουσεν.
>
> The things regarding Atlas are contradictory. For if the anvil descends for an interval of nine days to the earth, how is it

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[19] It is technically possible that Didymus will have mentioned instead *Odyssey* 10.212, where μιν again refers to δώματα, or that he referred to both *Odyssey* 10 and *Odyssey* 17. It may be instructive that the Q scholia to *Odyssey* 10.212 cite the *Odyssey* 17 passage as a comparandum, but not vice versa, and this *may* indicate that the latter was the primary locus for the discussion. Certainty is impossible here.

[20] It may be relevant that all four mentions of Didymus' name in the *Andromache* scholia contain criticism of some Euripidean error: Σ *Andromache* 330, 362, 885, 1077. It is certainly conceivable that there are more such criticisms of his remaining in our extant scholia without explicit attribution.

[21] τῶν πρόσθ' Ἰαπετοῖο πάις ἔχει οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν / ἑστηὼς κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ἀκαμάτῃσι χέρεσσιν / ἀστεμφέως (ed. West).

[22] ἐννέα γὰρ νύκτας τε καὶ ἤματα χάλκεος ἄκμων / οὐρανόθεν κατιών, δεκάτῃ κ' ἐς γαῖαν ἵκοιτο (*Theogony* 722–23).

possible that Atlas holds up the sky while standing on the earth? Although Homer meant 'And [Atlas] himself holds the pillars' [*Odyssey* 1.53] to stand for 'deems it worthy of his attention', that is, 'guards'—as also in another place: 'And he keeps my garden with many trees' [*Odyssey* 4.737]—Hesiod nevertheless understood it as standing for 'hold on to', that is, 'carry'.

According to this logic, Hesiod knew the Homeric verse and attempted to follow in the Poet's footsteps, but he misconstrued Homer's ἔχει as literal ('he holds') instead of figurative ('he guards'): Homer meant only that the pillars of heaven (here taken as a metonym for the sky itself) were the domain of Atlas, not that he physically supported them with his head and hands, as if in a pose similar to the famous image on the East metopes of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, where Herakles temporarily shoulders the burden of the sky while Atlas returns with the apples of the Hesperides.[23] Hesiod's own absurdity is thus explained by his (failed) attempt at Homeric reading.[24] Had he properly understood Homer's meaning by considering both the potential nuance

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[23] For arguments over the placement of Atlas and the nature of his burden, see Johnson 1999, p. 20–21 and Anghelina 2010, p. 196–98.

[24] The scholion's reference to Hesiod's engagement with Homer as 'hearing' (ἤκουσεν) is a normal figurative expression for the act of reading; see Schenkeveld 1992 and Nünlist 2009, p. 12, n. 41. Of course, although Nünlist is careful to note that ἀκούειν in scholarly writing refers to the act of reading aloud and not, strictly speaking, to the oral performance of Homeric epic, it is nonetheless admissible that, given how ancient scholars sometimes discuss Hesiod and Homer as contemporaries, the commentator in this particular scholion may well have envisioned a *viva voce* encounter (for discussions of the chronology, see Graziosi 2002, p. 102 and Koning 2010, p. 42–43). On the other hand, some Hesiodic scholia argue on the basis of Hesiod's poems that he must have been younger (νεώτερος) than Homer; see Σ *Theogony* 338 (ed. Di Gregorio) and Σ *Works and Days* 94 (ed. Pertusi), as well as a Homeric scholion to *Iliad* 12.22 that points even more explicitly to reading (ἀνέγνω; see again Koning 2010, p. 42 and n. 77). Such assertions in other scholia do not guarantee the meaning of ἤκουσεν in the present one, but they do suggest that this instance of ἀκούειν may indicate nothing more than reading, as it almost certainly does in a Pindaric example given below (παρακήκοεν). Regardless, the conflation of modes of speaking and writing in ancient commentaries is relevant to my thesis that authors (and their commentators) are conceived of as 'joining the conversation' with the literary lights of the past, even if through the medium of the written text. As I plan to argue in future work, the framing of reading-as-dialogue may simply reflect a continuing attachment to traditional modes of oral recitation, but, for post-classical scholars at least, such language may well be a deliberate strategy of resistance against Plato's famous critique of writing

of ἔχει and the corresponding figurative deployments of that verb in other Homeric passages (as the scholion itself demonstrates by the citation from *Odyssey* 4), he could have avoided self-contradiction.

Pindar also stumbled over Homeric myth because of a lexical misunderstanding. *Olympian* 9.29–36 alludes briefly to three military engagements between Herakles and the gods:

> ἐπεὶ ἀντίον
> πῶς ἂν τριόδοντος Ἡ-
> ρακλέης σκύταλον τίναξε χερσίν,
> ἀνίκ' ἀμφὶ Πύλον σταθεὶς ἤρειδε Ποσειδάν,
> ἤρειδεν δέ νιν ἀργυρέῳ τόξῳ πολεμίζων
> Φοῖβος, οὐδ' Ἀΐδας ἀκινήταν ἔχε ῥάβδον,
> βρότεα σώμαθ' ᾇ κατάγει κοίλαν πρὸς ἄγυιαν
> θνασκόντων; ἀπό μοι λόγον
> τοῦτον, στόμα, ῥῖψον.

> Since how could Herakles with his own hands
> have brandished his club against the trident,
> when Poseidon took his stand at Pylos and attacked him,
> and when Phoebus attacked him, warring
> with his silver bow, and when Hades did not keep idle his staff,
> with which he drives mortal bodies down along the hollow path
> of the dead? Mouth of mine, cast
> this story away from me.

In context, Pindar is in fact discrediting the validity of the myth insofar as it associates the immortals with warfare (πόλεμον μάχαν τε πᾶσαν, v. 40), but his readers seem to have understood that he was acknowledging a real episode, its impropriety for his current song notwithstanding. The scholia identify three distinct mythological events in the passage: 1) When Neleus refused to purify him, Herakles attacked Pylos and did battle with Poseidon, who had come to Neleus' defense. 2) Amidst another quest for ritual purification, Herakles struggled with Apollo over the Delphic tripod. 3) Herakles fought off Hades when attempting to steal Cer-

at *Phaedrus* 275d–e, where one of the key limitations of the written word is its failure to engage the reader in dialogue.

berus as one of his twelve labours. As some of the scholia relate, these episodes occurred at different times within the Heraklean saga, but some readers evidently insisted that Pindar meant that all three confrontations occurred at the same time, an interpretation that necessarily put pressure on the phrase ἀμφὶ Πύλον ('in Pylos').[25] While Herakles' fight against Poseidon was reasonably positioned at the city of Neleus, only a severe alteration of the myth could relocate his showdown with Apollo at Delphi and with Hades in the Underworld.

Assuming Pindar did intend to unify the events, why make the bizarre allegation that they occurred at Pylos? One or more commentators again read through a Homeric lens:

> ὅτι παρακήκοεν Ὁμήρου λέγοντος· 'ἐν πύλῳ ἐν νεκύεσσι'. διὸ καὶ μεμυθολόγηκε τὰ περὶ τὴν Πύλον τοῦ Νέστορος. Ὅμηρος δὲ οὐκ ἐν Πύλῳ λέγει τῇ πόλει, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν πύλῃ τῇ τοῦ Ἅιδου φησὶν αὐτὸν μάχεσθαι.

> [Pindar composes this way] because he misunderstood Homer when he said 'at the gate among the dead' [ἐν πύλῳ, *Iliad* 5.397]. For this reason, [Pindar] has also made up the story about Nestor's Pylos. But Homer does not mean in Pylos the city, but rather he says he fought at the gate [ἐν πύλῃ] of Hades.

In the context of the Homeric citation above, Aphrodite seeks respite on Olympus after being wounded by Diomedes, and Dione consoles her by appealing to other deities who have also suffered at the hands of mortals, including Hades, wounded by the arrow of Herakles 'at the gate among the dead', that is, in the Underworld. Such was the opinion of Aristarchus, who understood Homer's πύλῳ as stand-in for πύλη, a heteroclitic phenomenon exhibited

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[25] One comment in the scholia states that Pindar uniquely combines the battles (ἰδίως κἀν τούτοις ὁ Πίνδαρος Ἡρακλέα γράφει τοῖς τρισὶ πολεμῆσαι θεοῖς), and another suggests that perhaps Pindar did so on purpose for the sake of augmenting his praise of Herakles even beyond what the facts of the case allowed (εἴη δ᾽ ἂν ὁ Πίνδαρος τὰ καὶ τόποις καὶ χρόνοις διεστῶτα εἰς ἕνα καιρὸν ἄγων ἕνεκα τοῦ μειζόνως ἢ ὡς ἔσχε ταῖς ἀληθείαις τὸν Ἡρακλέα ἐπαινεῖν). The reason for this reading of the text may lie in the arrangement of clauses under a single ἀνίκα ('when'), or the fact that Pindar himself refers collectively to the episodes as 'this [single] account' (λόγον τοῦτον). For a thorough discussion of modern interpretations (though without mention of the debate over πύλῳ vs. Πύλῳ), see Gerber 2002, p. 34–36.

also by certain other nouns like χόλος/ χολή.[26] Herein lay Pindar's problem, according to the scholion above, for, not recognizing this linguistic principle, he misconstrued Homer's πύλῳ as a proper noun indicating Nestor's Pylos instead of as a common noun meaning 'gate'. This 'mishearing' (παρακήκοεν) resulted in a mythographic hybrid in which Herakles fought Hades as well as Poseidon and Apollo in the southern Greek mainland. As with Hesiod, Pindar was paying careful attention to Homer's account, but not careful enough.[27]

Beyond these relatively minor lexicographical slips, perhaps most egregious of all were those moments in which authors failed to detect some subtlety of Homer's *ars poetica*, a sign that they had misunderstood a key feature of the Poet's *oeuvre*. Let us take the famous case of Agamemnon's *nostos*-turned-nightmare, an episode commonly rehashed by the tragedians, often with important modifications to the regicidal details reported in Homer. Among the more substantial divergences was the role of Clytemnestra, whose bloody hand on the tragic stage turns abruptly from her

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[26] Σ *Iliad* 5.397; see Matthaios 1999, p. 275 and Schironi 2018, p. 194–95. Homer's phrase ἐν πύλῳ was itself disputed. The same scholion that reports Aristarchus' opinion also preserves a dissenting voice, which claims that Homer always refers to the 'gates' of Hades in the plural, never the singular, such that the noun should be taken as proper: 'in Pylos'. Most likely this commentator means Elean Pylos, which, according to Pausanias (6.25.2–3), was alleged to have been the place described by the Iliadic verse in question, and this on the ground both that Herakles was reported to have attacked it and that a sanctuary of Hades was found nearby, hence the involvement of the god in the battle. The extant form of the Homeric scholion may well depend directly on Pausanias, but they may partake of a common source, or even of independent sources. In any case, I am aware of no evidence that Homer's phrase was ever taken to mean Nestor's (= Messenian) Pylos, as it is in the Pindaric ode.

[27] The scholia to *Olympian* 9.29 attribute a similar bit of reasoning to Didymus, although his stance seems to have been more lenient, allowing Pindar the poetic license to construct the mythical episode(s) as he saw fit. Still, there is a hint that Didymus explained Pindar's version as a Homeric misreading, even if he could find a rhetorical or poetic justification of the result. Of course, the most charitable reading is to take Pindar's phrase in reference to Poseidon only, not least because the allegation of Homeric misreading still does not explain the involvement of Apollo, whatever it meant in relation to Hades. The leap in logic required by the three-in-one reading demonstrates the extent to which ancient scholars were sometimes willing to stretch the meaning of a text to fit a preconceived exegetical framework in which Homeric borrowings (and misreadings) were especially common. For some general comments on the degree to which Pindar faced such criticism in the scholia, see Calvani Mariotti 1987, p. 127–30.

more passive aiding and abetting of Aegisthus in Homer. Readers varied in their tolerance for such changes, with at least some granting tragedians the poetic license to make sizable alterations for the sake of increasing the pathos of their productions.[28] In cases where the departure was not clearly motivated by some pragmatic cause, however, commentators could be less forgiving. Thus, when Euripides' Polymestor prophesies that Clytemnestra will kill Agamemnon by 'lifting high the axe' (πέλεκυν ἐξάρασ' ἄνω, *Hecuba* 1279), the scholia take issue not with the queen's agency, but with the choice of murder weapon. In Homer, the ghost of Agamemnon claims to have died by the sword (ἀποθνήσκων περὶ φασγάνῳ, *Odyssey* 11.424), a detail followed by Aeschylus but not by Euripides.[29] If the substitution of weapon had no immediately obvious poetic motivation, and assuming that Euripides would have wanted to follow Homer's authoritative precedent unless he had good reason not to do so, what could account for the errant detail? The scholia explain:

> οἱ νεώτεροι μὴ νοήσαντες τὸ παρ' Ὁμήρῳ· 'δειπνίσσας ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ' ἀντὶ τοῦ· ὃν ἔδει μετὰ τοὺς πόνους ἀπολαύσεως τυχεῖν, τοῦτον ὡς βοῦν ἀπέκτεινεν ἡ Κλυταιμνήστρα, προσέθηκαν ὅτι καὶ πελέκει ἀνῃρέθη. διὸ σημειωτέον ἐνταῦθα τὸ 'καὐτὸν τοῦτον πέλεκυν ἐξάρασ' ἄνω'.

> The more recent authors infer that [Agamemnon] was also killed with an axe, because they do not understand the verse in Homer: 'Having brought me to feast, killed me like someone kills an ox at the feeding trough', which stands for 'I, the one who should have enjoyed some relaxation after my toils, this man Clytemnestra killed like an ox'. For this reason, it is necessary here to note [Euripides'] verse, 'And [she will kill] this man himself also by lifting high the axe'.[30]

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[28] Most notably, the scholia to Sophocles' *Electra* tend to view departures from Homeric precedent with a generous eye, and this includes the matter of Clytemnestra's agency (see especially Σ *Electra* 445, ed. Xenis).

[29] *Agamemnon* 1262, 1351. See Matthiessen 2008, p. 418 and Battezzato 2018, p. 254.

[30] The perpetrator in the *Odyssey* is of course Aegisthus, not Clytemnestra; the scholion's loose paraphrase of the epic verse has undoubtedly been influenced by the tragic context. As for the scholion's understanding of Euripides, it has been suggested to me that σημειωτέον here means 'must be marked with a marginal sign' and indicates the obelus, signalling that the verse should be deleted. This reading

That is, Homer's ox simile was taken to mean that an axe must have been involved in the murder, as that is the kind of weapon one uses on such an animal. What Euripides and his cohort failed to grasp, according to the scholion, was that Homer's simile applied not to the *means* of death, but to the *manner*: Aegisthus murdered Agamemnon by the trap of a feast, a ruse meant to make him an easy target, just as one might kill an ox unawares 'at the trough' (ἐπὶ φάτνῃ), as Homer put it. The *neoteroi* thus show their misunderstanding (μὴ νοήσαντες) of a key facet of Homer's poetry by pressing his simile too far, attempting to apply it to every detail of the Mycenaean myth instead of considering a more nuanced reading.[31]

For another example of misunderstood Homeric technique, we may return to the *Andromache* prologue, where the play's title character laments her double plight: Achilles had killed her husband Hector, and her son Astyanax had been hurled from the walls of Troy when the city was sacked (ῥιφθέντα πύργων, v. 10). As the scholia show, at least one third-century BC grammarian took issue with the latter claim:

> Λυσανίας κατηγορεῖ Εὐριπίδου κακῶς λέγων αὐτὸν ἐξειληφέναι τὸ παρ' Ὁμήρῳ λεχθέν ('ἤ τις Ἀχαιῶν ῥίψει χειρὸς ἑλὼν ἀπὸ πύργου') οὐχ ὡς πάντως γενόμενον, ἀλλ' εἰκαζόμενον ὡσεὶ ἔλεγε κατακαυθήσεσθαι τὸν παῖδα ἤ τι ἄλλο.

is possible, but σημειωτέον can also mean more generally 'must be noted' (i.e., *nota bene*; see, e.g., Σ *Andromache* 616), as I have rendered it above, and in the present case the argument seems to be not that the verse is corrupt, but rather the opposite: the verse is assumed to exemplify a genuine Euripidean stance, comparable to that of other *neoteroi*, based on a misreading of Homer. If a particular marginal sign is indicated, I would guess that it is the chi, often used quite generically as 'N.B.' and occasionally indicating passages that break from Homeric tradition, as here. For the use and prevalence of chi especially in scholia to dramatic texts, see above all Pontani 2018.

[31] A scholion to *Odyssey* 4.535 alludes to the scholarly *topos* by stating that 'Homer does not know of the chiton and the axe' (τὸν γὰρ χιτῶνα καὶ τὸν πέλεκυν Ὅμηρος οὐκ οἶδεν), that is, the props associated with the murder on the tragic stage. Although the scholia to *Odyssey* 11.424 do not discuss the axe, they do mention a debate over the meaning of the ox simile, and it may be relevant that the preferred interpretation there closely aligns with that of the Euripidean scholion (viz., that the simile shows how Agamemnon was caught off guard in what should have been a moment of respite). Modern scholars are still divided on the very identity of Clytemnestra's weapon. See Davidson 1988, p. 60 and Prag 1991, with further references.

> Lysanias blames Euripides, criticizing him for adopting that utterance in Homer ('Indeed some Achaean will take you by the hand and cast you from the tower' [*Iliad* 24.734–35]), which was said not as if it would certainly happen, but as a guess, just as if one were to say that the child would be burned or some other such thing.

It must certainly be said in agreement with Lysanias that the Homeric context portrays Andromache's claim as nothing more than a mother's worried hypothesizing about her son's fate, especially since in the immediately preceding verses Andromache herself has suggested that Astyanax might face enslavement rather than death. These mutually exclusive fears cannot be taken as a certain prophecy of the future. Of course, given that Astyanax was indeed hurled from the Trojan parapet in accounts of the myth from the Epic Cycle, a more charitable reading of the prologue would assume that Euripides simply chose to follow sources other than Homer, and in fact the scholion above goes on to offer this very solution. But instead of giving Euripides the license to choose whatever version suited his tragedy, Lysanias rigorously stuck to his assumption that Euripides had tried, and failed, to follow the Poet.[32]

At the heart of this dispute is what ancient scholarship deemed a customary feature of Homeric mythography. While the Poet was especially renowned for his ability to present a coherent and unified narrative, he was also assumed to have been aware of additional mythical traditions either that lay outside the scope of his epics—famous at least as early as Aristotle for their judicious selection of material—or that would have created some internal contradiction. Furthermore, it was assumed that Homer carefully encoded into his poems a series of subtle allusions to these

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[32] Compare the D Scholia to *Iliad* 24.734 (ed. Van Thiel), where post-Homeric poets are again said to have gotten the story of Astyanax' plunge from Andromache's claim, with no mention of the possibility that they could be relying on other sources. As the examples above have suggested, the assumption that canonical authors obsessively look to Homer for their own composition is common, and in some cases that assumption must be held onto with some intensity in order to maintain an allegation of Homeric misreading, as in the present instance, where the exegetical dilemma is easily enough solved by pushing Homer into the background—something ancient commentators on the whole seem quite loathe to do.

divergent mythical pathways, a sign to the alert reader of stories that Homer could have told, had he so desired. One of the more remarkable examples concerns the famous debate over whether Paris actually took Helen to Troy or, reading with Stesichorus, that she was left in Egypt, while merely an apparition of her sailed to Priam's city. As one bit of commentary put it, a 'fake' Helen would make Homer's entire *Iliad* an absurdity, given how much effort, resources, and lives were sacrificed therein for the sake of a ghost.[33] According to this argument, Homer therefore placed the real Helen in Troy, but, lest he be accused of deceit or ignorance, he inserted the subtlest of allusions to the alternate myth: when Apollo removes Aeneas from battle and replaces him with a ghost in his likeness, Homer says that 'the Trojans and noble Achaeans fought around the ghost' (*Iliad* 5.451), a statement that in context hardly stands out, but that, when viewed from the perspective of a highly allusive Homeric mythography, tantalizingly holds out the possibility that the entire *Iliad* has been just that, a struggle over an apparition.[34] It is in this sense, I believe, that we should consider Lysanias' criticism. Euripides has not simply missed the hypothetical nature of Andromache's fear; he has forgotten—or totally misunderstood—Homer's tendency to allude to alternate mythical pathways without guaranteeing their actual occurrence.

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Let me close by returning to the broader question of how accusations of misreading function as a networking tool within ancient criticism. I argued at the outset that this polemical manoeuvre in effect brings literary critics into the same circle as the post-Homeric authors they evaluate, at least insofar as each party is

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[33] Σ Aelius Aristides, *Panathenaic Oration* 131.1 (ed. Dindorf); a similar interpretation occurs in the Servius Danielis commentary to *Aeneid* 2.601.

[34] Although I do not find the position much elaborated in ancient scholarship, it is possible to read in these discussions of Homer's method a slight insistence on the Poet's own belatedness, in the sense that Homer shows a kind of anxiety over the mythical cosmos within which he performed, a cosmos already fraught with its own baked-in contradictions and mutual exclusivities (see Burgess 2012). If scholars did see echoes of belatedness in Homer himself, this viewpoint would only further widen the diachronic sphere in which literary critics could operate, a sphere in which not even the great Homer could escape considerations of his own context.

defined by its relation to the Poet. In this respect, scholars join a network of Greek literati at the highest level of prestige, and their critical acumen, demonstrated by calling out mistakes in that circle's most elite members, solidifies their place in this reified 'museum'. Canonical authors are thereby chronologically pulled forward into a dialogic space characterized by contentious academic interactions, where their responses to Homer may be challenged. We might therefore consider the polemics of Homeric misreading to be a natural extension of the wrangling spirit in the Alexandrian birdcage, as Timon might say.

But there is another dimension to this networking potential, as I want to show by a brief glimpse at Old Comedy. In Aristophanes' *Wealth*, Cario and the chorus celebrate their newfound hope for riches with a short farce in which they execute their playful back-and-forth braggadocio by adopting famous Homeric personae. Cario imitates the Cyclops piping a merry tune and commands the chorus to follow along like Polyphemus' flocks (vv. 290–95). The chorus turn the tables on the allusion, claiming that they will follow along for now but will gouge out Cario's eye if he turns out to be a beggarly Cyclops carrying a knapsack of vegetables (296–301). After Cario doubles down on his power play by claiming to be the Circe to the chorus' swine (302–08), the chorus then retort that they will string Cario up as Odysseus did Melanthius (309–15). Among these clearly recognizable Homeric allusions, the vegetable-toting Cyclops stands out in contrast to his carnivorous epic counterpart.[35] The scholia explain the reference as a nod to the tragedian Philoxenus, said to have described Polyphemus as a blind vegetarian who tried to woo Galatea with his lyre.[36] What makes this identification particularly interesting is how one scholion describes Aristophanes' aim:

[35] *Odyssey* 9.311, 344, 347.

[36] According to the scholarly tradition, Philoxenus composed his play as satire against the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius, who reportedly punished Philoxenus for an act of violence against one of his mistresses, named Galatea. The image of the singing Cyclops would later become especially famous through the compositions of Theocritus, Ovid, and Lucian. Given that the elements of Philoxenus' work appear to have been largely Homeric (see Hordern 1999), it is of course possible that in Aristophanes we are looking at a set of layered mythological references that apply to both Homer and Philoxenus, with the exception of the emphasis on vegetables.

ταῦτα δὲ πάντα διασύρων τὸν Φιλόξενον εἶπεν, ὡς μὴ ἀληθεύοντα. ὁ γὰρ Κύκλωψ, ὥς φησιν Ὅμηρος, κρέα ἤσθιε, καὶ οὐ λάχανα.

And <Aristophanes> said all these things to mock Philoxenus for not speaking the truth. For the Cyclops, as Homer says, ate meat and not vegetables.

The insistence that Aristophanes included these Cyclopean details specifically in order to mock (διασύρων) Philoxenus is surprising. In fact, Aristophanes gives no explicit indication that he means any of this parodic description as a critique of any particular poet, and it is easy enough to read the scene as a comic concatenation of mythical images from various sources without special concern for their accuracy or coherence. The commentator nonetheless readily assumes that the comic poet has polemical intentions. What is more, although the text shows no hint of a comparison between different versions of the Cyclops myth in different authors, the commentator assumes further that Aristophanes' rationale for critiquing Philoxenus is a Homeric one. If I am correct in reading the scholion's γάρ clause as focalized through the comic poet, the commentator's allegation is not simply that Aristophanes mocks Philoxenus as getting the details wrong (μὴ ἀληθεύοντα), but that he faults him for not accurately following Homer, whose account is the 'true' one. In other words, Aristophanes himself has used a technique similar to what I have been describing: an accusation of Homeric misreading deployed as a scholarly tool to isolate zones of 'good' and 'bad' Homeric reception, and therefore, at least potentially, of 'good' and 'bad' Homeric readers. And again, it is crucial to note that the comic text gives no indication that any metaliterary mockery was intended, much less that this mockery was rooted in (bad) Homeric exegesis. That the commentator assumes this mode of Aristophanic operation shows just how thoroughly the polemics of misreading have permeated the literary critical system, being both applied by commentators against canonical authors and also retroactively attributed to those canonical authors as their own practice.

This detail is crucial when evaluating criticisms of Homeric misreading from the standpoint of networking models within ancient scholarship, and particularly within commentary writing. If commentators used accusations of misreading as a way of 'join-

ing the conversation' at the most prestigious levels of Greek literary composition, they also seem to have envisioned the method as an integral part of the canonical authors' own approach toward Homer and toward each other, albeit one that appeared in a less explicit form. And so, by using that technique themselves, scholars directly participated in an established activity of that diachronic literary circle. Approaching commentary writing in this way could by no means completely cure an anxiety of belatedness for later periods, but in an important way it could limit its effects by pointing to the common ground inhabited by 'those after Homer'. In this shared intellectual territory, reified above all by the Hellenistic library system and carried on subsequently in the marginal space of the codex, a capable scholar could challenge the exegesis of Homer's most illustrious readers.[37]

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Abstract

This paper examines a repeated technique in ancient scholarship in which a commentator accuses a canonical author of misinterpreting Homer and, as a result, of composing inaccurate or nonsensical poetry.

In so doing, ancient critics find common 'post-Homeric' ground with those canonical authors and thus create a diachronic literary coterie defined by its shared Homeric readership. As demonstrated by a selection of relevant scholia to Euripides, Pindar, and Hesiod, the recurrence of this networking strategy shows not only that commentators were interested in the elevation of their own status as competent critics of Homeric and other literature, but also that they considered the very act of reading Homer to have been a central determining factor in the production of subsequent Greek literature. Since it was taken for granted that all other canonical authors had dealt closely with Homer in their own compositions, it became possible to explain perceived irregularities or errors in those compositions by supposing that the authors had tried to follow Homer but failed to understand some nuance of his language or poetic technique. This retrojection of contemporary scholarly practice onto the authors of the canon facilitated the collocation of past poet and contemporary scholar in a virtual bibliothecal environment, one in which any of Homer's readers could be censured for misreading his poetry.

BRUNO MARIEN

RECOMMENDATION IN LATE ANTIQUE EPISTOLOGRAPHERS IN THE CONTEXT OF PERSONAL NETWORKS

THE EXAMPLE OF LIBANIUS AND OTHER FOURTH-CENTURY LETTER WRITERS *

1. *Introduction. Recommendations and Personal Networks*

Recommendation letters were very common in ancient epistolography. Before embarking on a discussion on how recommendation letters functioned in a letter writer's network, I would like to briefly place the ancient recommendation letter within its larger framework, because, as I will make clear, this kind of letter could be used in a variety of circumstances and fit a wide spectrum of purposes.[1] In the next paragraphs, I will first give a summary overview of recent literature and then provide a broad description of what I consider a recommendation letter.

Recent scholarly literature has examined the ancient recommendation letter from different perspectives. Not only did it consider the formal features of such a document or explore themes that are common to several letter writers, it also revealed specific functions and uses of this kind of letter and highlighted that the recommendation was an instrument in a letter writer's network. It would lead too far to list all of the publications that treat these

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[1] Nowadays a recommendation letter is mostly written in order to endorse someone for a specific function. However, it would be wrong to limit the ancient recommendation letter to this one purpose.

major strands of research. However, the works mentioned in the next paragraph, can be cited as relevant for a specific author or aspect.[2]

Kim (1972) investigated the integral elements that constituted a recommendation letter.[3] Cotton (1984 and 1985) highlighted the formal aspects of Cicero's recommendation letters. The common themes in the letters from Cicero to Fronto were discussed by Plantera (1977). Rees (2007) has argued that the recommendations of Pliny and Fronto display a remarkable continuity in the form from Cicero, but are markedly influenced by epideictic rhetoric.[4] Cabouret (2011a & 2011b) has pointed out that Libanius easily adapted the set pattern of recommendation letters into highly personalised documents. It has been shown by Deniaux (2011) that recommendation letters could be used in a judicial context, as an instrument to influence a judge or as a testimony of someone's character. The issue how Symmachus' recommendation letters were part of the late antique Roman betrothal practice has been investigated by Sogno (2010). Llewelyn (1998) focused on recommendation letters used in a Christian context. Verboven (2002) studied such letters in the framework of economical interests and activities.[5] According to Bruggisser (1993), the epistolary friendship in Symmachus' letters is grounded on three *officia*. The '*devoir de recommandation*' is one of them.[6] How Libanius' letters are able to reveal the social network of the letter writer has been explored by Sandwell (2007).

In listing the common features that can be distilled from most recommendation letters, I would describe a recommendation as a request addressed to someone of (generally) the same (or higher) status and belonging to the writer's network, on behalf of a third person (the recommendee). Frequently such letter was carried by the recommendee himself. The recommendation letter was often

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[2] This list does not allow for an exhaustive overview. Moreover, some of the issues have been treated more within the framework of ancient epistolography than at the level of the ancient recommendation letter, It particularly applies for topics such as rhetoric, friendship or network.

[3] Kim 1972, p. 1–95. Already in 1935 Keyes detected some characteristic formulas in recommendation letters without connecting them to the underlying structure of the letter.

[4] Rees 2007, p. 156–67.

[5] Verboven 2002, p. 287–323.

[6] Bruggisser 1993, p. 1–24.

transformational, in that it intended to change the recommendee's status. It is an instrument that exhibits asymmetries of power and knowledge, and it permits communication in a mediated way with a person who was usually more powerful than the recommendee himself. It can be considered a means of bridging a physical, hierarchical or mental distance between recommendee and addressee. Most probably, the voice of the recommendee is not heard in any direct sense. The letter writer must have infused the text with some of his own mentalities, especially when representing the recommendee's qualities.[7]

Recommendation letters fit a wide spectrum of purposes, ranging from a mere introduction that requests the addressee to exercise patronage over the recommendee, to an intervention, in which the element of support or aid is important, and finally to a letter that endorses the recommendee for a specific position or office. Such letters could easily be adapted to suit a variety of circumstances.[8] Ancient epistolary theory also dwelt upon recommendation letters.[9] Since neither the recommendee nor the addressee is systematically praised in the recommendation, I do not think that such a letter can be ranged under the encomiastic genre.

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[7] I came to this broad description, after having read the recommendation letters of most Greek and Latin epistolographers. The number of recommendations letters ranged by letter writer can be found in Marien 2018, p. 186, n. 7.

[8] There are a few examples of some less common circumstances in which recommendation letters could be used: (i) Letters of recommendation could serve to establish one's religious credentials (see Allen & Neil 2013, p. 49 who refer to a decree of Pope Anastasius I). Augustine, *Ep.* 253 might be one such letter; (ii) An edict from AD 370 determined that students of higher education in Rome or Constantinople had to provide (amongst other documents) a letter of recommendation (Cribiore 2007, p. 213); (iii) The recommendation letter was ingrained in the Roman legal system, as it was generally admitted that rights and obligations could be derived from such kind of letters. Roman law pointed out that the trust inherent to a recommendation letter could be abused in a fraudulent context, and was thus open for an *actio* by the injured party, for example in case of identity fraud (*Dig.* XLVII.2.67 [66].4) or financial fraud (*Dig.* IV.3.8 [*Gaius*, Provincial Edict, book 8]). Moreover, Roman law developed legal concepts, distinct from a recommendation, such as a *fideicommissum* or a mandate (see *Dig.* XXXII.11.2 and *Dig.* XVII.1.12.12).

[9] This is supported by the inclusion of the recommendation letter in the epistolary treatises of Ps.-Demetrius' *Formae epistolicae* and Ps.-Libanius' *Characteres epistolici*. Iulius Victor, *Ars rhetorica* XXVII, 36–37 devoted—within his treatment of the familiar letter—a few lines to the recommendation letter. Furthermore, *Codex Theodosianus* 2.31.2 proves that a strong link existed between the familiar, personal letter (*familiaris epistola*) and the recommendation.

A recommendation letter functioned in a letter writer's network. When Libanius wrote a recommendation to an influential addressee, he hoped to obtain some position or advantage for his recommendee. It is important to keep in mind that probably other epistolographers were also keen on gaining some benefit for their recommendee.

In this respect, the importance of a recommendation letter cannot be underestimated because in (late) antiquity, the state almost completely lacked an effective administrative machinery that could allocate (human) resources. An objective system of assigning these means did hardly exist.[10] The formal requirement for a position was thus not so much the level of competence required for this position as the social status of the applicant.[11] Public appointments were not determined by considerations of professional suitability or competence.[12] Personal networks and recommendations were therefore the primary means available to obtain an office, to influence a decision, or to petition for government action.[13] In other words, they were instruments of lobbying and functioned in a state characterised by a rather ineffective architecture and limitations of manpower. Office holders enjoying wide discretionary powers thus compensated for the relative lack of effectiveness.

Special attention is to be paid to the addressee of such a letter, who often was an important office holder. It can safely be assumed that anyone in an influential office was probably inun-

[10] In the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century most Western governments regulated recruitment for and appointment into public positions.

[11] Competence as a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge, skills, behaviour and values that enable to perform a specific role or to improve performance is a modern idea. The American psychologist Robert W. White was the first to coin this term in 1959. The concept of 'competence' has no well-defined equivalent in ancient sources. In antiquity, a position was rarely understood to imply a certain level and quality of performance. See Pedersen 1975, specifically p. 175 and 184–85. Jones 1964, p. 386: 'For the civilian offices specialised qualifications were much less regarded. The traditional Roman view that administration was something which any man of normal ability could undertake, whether it involved finance or jurisdiction, still prevailed'.

[12] An conspicuous example is Symm., *Ep.* I, 66. In this letter, Gelasius, who, prior to the recommendation was a doctor to important men at court, is recommended for a post that possibly involves overseeing imperial property.

[13] See Verboven 2011, p. 414.

dated with requests and faced an important workload in dealing with such petitions.[14] The sheer volume of business that such an office holder had to handle is hinted at in Lib., *Ep*. 617.2: 'I did not deem it necessary to send you many letters, since you deal with many cases and you receive many letters'.[15] Even if we maintain that such statement is coloured by rhetoric, it sustains the basic idea that an office holder was confronted with a considerable amount of work.[16] He certainly could not honour every request, and, as a result, was regularly confronted with difficult choices. He had to decide which demand he would grant and which one turn down.[17] Careful consideration was then necessary when an office holder dealt with such a high number of cases. His decision would be influenced by several factors, such as his ties with the letter writer and/or the recommendee, the available resources, the moment of intervention, and the potential benefit that he might gain from this or other cases.[18] When a recommending person wanted to achieve some result, his letter had to be singled out in a

[14] Insights from papyrology also point to this important work volume; see Kelly 2011, p. 112: 'The petitions received by the prefect during a particular conventus session could run into the hundreds, or even thousands. It is hardly realistic to expect the prefect and his rather limited staff to deal with each case promptly and [...] P. Yale 1.61 (AD 208–10) mentions that 1,804 petitions addressed to the prefect governor during the conventus in a little over two days'.

[15] Γράμματα δέ σοι πέμπειν πολλὰ οὐκ ᾠήθην δεῖν πολλὰ μὲν πράττοντι πράγματα, πολλὰ δὲ δεχομένῳ γράμματα [...]. Another example from the same author is Lib., *Ep*. 1443.1

[16] At any rate, it cannot be viewed apart from antique typology that made a distinction between private letters that one was glad to receive (and to answer) and official letters that were part of the obligations linked to someone's position. See for example: Fronto, *Ad M. Caes*. 3.14.1: '[...] at your having written me so many letters in so few days, composed too with such felicity, such friendship, such kindness, such fulness, such ardour, though you were distracted by so much business, so many duties, so many letters to be answered throughout the provinces.' (trans. Haines).

[17] I agree with Bradbury 2014, p. 234 who states that 'officials were deluged with requests and might feel "oppressed" by their correspondents and "might just throw the letter away"'. An example of this (negligent) attitude can be found in Lib., *Ep*. 1310.1: 'Evanthius, whom I know, informs me that you take delight in my letters and, upon reception, do not throw them away. This is what addressees who receive letters from everywhere, are used to do'. Maybe some members of staff had the task to select the more important letters.

[18] When resources are scarce, the (perceived) opportunity cost (i.e. the loss of potential benefit from other alternatives when one alternative is chosen) becomes an important element.

mass of letters, or to put it in purely economic terms, through his letter he had to exert influence on an unequal relation between offer and demand.

As a result, the personal network could easily operate in a context of recommendation letters. In such cases, a letter writer, who acted as a power broker, attracted individuals in search of a powerful patron.[19] It goes without saying that a personal network would vary over time according to someone's achievements, status, or influence. I will discuss three elements that indicate personal networks: (i) the recommendation process, (ii) recommendation letters written to a main office holder and a member of his staff, (iii) recommendation letters addressed to an office holder and another important person.[20] The examples are mainly, but not exclusively, taken from Libanius' letters. Moreover, there are reasons to believe that personal networks could come in competition with each other. As this hypothesis cannot be proven by the extant sources, competing networks are postulated on purely theoretical grounds.

2. *The Recommendation Process*

Recommending someone cannot be seen exclusively through the lens of a recommendation letter. A recommendation letter rather forms part of a more elaborate and broader recommendation process. Understanding an epistolographer's network will largely benefit from embedding his recommendation letters within this larger recommendation process. Time is an essential factor, as let-

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[19] Furthermore, such a powerful patron would receive recommendations from several letter writers. The remnant letter collections demonstrate that high ranking office holders, both civil and military officials, received interventions from applicants, who lived in the Latinophone and Hellenophone areas of the empire. At least five instances can be cited: (i) Sophronius 3/i, *Magister Officiorum,* received letters from Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil; (ii) Flavius Rufinus 18, *Magister Officiorum*, received letters from Libanius and Symmachus; (iii) Ellebichus -/-, *Magister militum Orientis,* received letters from Libanius and Gregory of Nazianzus; (iv) Richomeres -/-, *Magister militum* received letters from Libanius and Symmachus and (v) Themistius 1/i received letters from Libanius and Gregory of Nazianzus.

[20] Other factors, such as friendship or patronage, also point to personal networks. I prefer discussing those aspects that are directly related to recommendation, since they have not (sufficiently) been highlighted by scholars so far.

ters frequently refer to past situations or possible future outcomes. Such 'time-related' arguments have to be distinguished from more 'static' arguments, such as the personality or the merits of the recommendee.[21]

Scholars dealing with Libanius' letters have not highlighted this process so far, but have focused more on the recommendation letter itself.[22] I suggest to broaden the perspective and to discuss elements that occurred before, after or simultaneously with the recommendation letter. In Libanius' letters I identified some one hundred passages, that point to this process and allowed me to discern five major stages.[23] The recommendation process reveals how a personal network operates, since much in this process deals with influence, power and status, not only of the addressee, but also of the letter writer. A personal network was often flexible and could be adapted to changing circumstances. In the following I will discuss the five stages of this process. Each of these will be illustrated by one or more examples.

2.1. Previous Action

A first stage are those actions that already have been taken in favour of the recommendee. The aim of mentioning previous actions is to give more weight to the current recommendation, and, correspondingly, to limit the addressee's manoeuvring room. In this way, the letter writer reduces the recipient's possibility to deny the request. The letters give a good idea of the variety of actions by which the epistolographer could promote the case of his recommendee. These actions comprise previous discussions and inter-

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[21] Recommendation letters that solely aim to present the recommendee, such as introduction letters, or that are exclusively based on 'static' arguments fall outside the scope of the recommendation process.

[22] I also found a similar recommendation process in Symmachus' letters (see Marien 2018, p. 223–27).

[23] Three of these stages are situated prior to any decision, whereas the two other occur after the recommendation resulted in a (positive) decision. Not every stage is equally present in Libanius' letters. The analysis will reveal that Libanius focused on mentioning his previous actions or arguing for future actions (first and second stage). He also pays special attention to stressing the vital role of the addressee in realising the request (fifth stage). It confirms that Libanius intended to present himself as an influential power broker, who was able, thanks to his position of leading sophist, to use his influence in and outside the Antiochene society.

ventions with the addressee of the letter; prior assurances by the recipient of the letter; also the addressee or a third person might already have written a recommendation for the same individual; the letter writer might also have approached a more influential office holder for the same case.

A few examples from this large group may suffice:

(i) previous discussions: 'You know whom I mean, if indeed you recall our conversations and the letter I sent' (Lib., *Ep*. 1114.3; trans. Bradbury 2004).[24]

(ii) prior assurances: 'He is that man whom you were ready to enroll among your friends, when I praised him, and you urged me to introduce the fellow to you' (Lib., *Ep*. 739.3; trans. Bradbury 2004).[25]

(iii) an intervention by the addressee of the current letter: 'Our good friend Nicentius whom you used to commend to me in your letters—in fact, that letter of yours formed the basis of the friendship between us—Nicentius, I repeat, […]' (Lib., *Ep*. 21.3; trans. Norman 1992).[26]

(iv) an intervention with Libanius by a third person for the same individual: 'The noble Palladius sent me what you wrote to him about Dionysius and asked me what one must do. He showed that even if he wished me to do a favour, laws prevented him to do so' (Lib., *Ep*. 1169.1; trans. Cribiore 2015, slightly modified).[27]

(v) Libanius as the recipient of an indirect intervention: [28] 'I care about the children of Hestiaeus on account of both of their uncles who went to school with me, and of their grandfather, who regarded me as one of his sons. […] There is an old man in Cyrrhus, Mares, who is more destitute than old,

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[24] Οἶσθα, ὃν λέγω, εἰ δὴ μέμνησαι τῶν τε ἐνταῦθα λόγων τῶν τε πεμφθέντων γραμμάτων.

[25] Οὗτος δέ ἐστιν ἐκεῖνος, ὃν ἐπαινοῦντος ἐμοῦ ἐγγράφειν ἕτοιμος εἰς τοὺς φίλους ἦσθα, καὶ προσάγειν τὸν ἄνδρα ἐκέλευσας.

[26] Νικέντιον γὰρ τὸν καλόν, ὃν σὺ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπῄνεις ἐν γράμμασι, καὶ τὸ γράμμα γε ἐκεῖνο φιλίαν ἡμῖν εἰργάσατο, τοῦτον δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα […].

[27] Ἃ περὶ Διονυσίου πρὸς τὸν γενναῖον Παλλάδιον ἔγραψας, πέμψας ἐκεῖνος πρὸς ἐμὲ ᾕρετο, τί δεῖ ποιεῖν, ἐνδεικνύμενος ὡς οὐδ' εἰ σφόδρα βούλοιτό μοι χαρίζεσθαι, δύναιτ' ἂν διὰ τοὺς νόμους.

[28] It means that Libanius was requested to intervene for third person (A), who himself did not approach the letter writer, but passed through someone else (B) who would write in his favour to Libanius (C).

and he is quite old. These people are asking for him not to be completely worn out' (Lib., *Ep*. 144.1 and 3; trans. Cribiore 2015, with a slight modification).[29]

(vi) Libanius had already approached another person for the same recommendee: [30] 'In turn, I introduce this man to Modestus and then to you through my letter. I esteem that this favour will not be inferior to the first one' (i.e., to Modestus) (Lib., *Ep*. 164.1).[31]

2.2. Arguments for Future Action

Secondly, the letter writer might argue for future action. In this case he clearly states what he expects to be done, or subtly suggests such an action.[32] The letters of indirect intervention also belong to this category, as they ask the letter recipient to discuss the case with a third individual, who is often more influential than the addressee himself. The arguments in this large group of letters are based on the personality (including previous actions) of the recommendee, letter writer or addressee, or another more influential person. The examples from this large group are ranged according to the individual who is in view.

(i) the recommendee: 'Now Polianus who hurries again to you, eagerly sought to carry a letter. The reason for this is not that he has not yet gained much influence with you, that he can boldly mention someone else to you. It is because he knew that letters from me would make his arrival more pleasant, and therefore

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[29] Τῶν Ἑστιαίου παίδων μέλει μοι καὶ διὰ τοὺς θείους αὐτῶν, οἳ συνεφοίτησάν μοι, καὶ διὰ τὸν πάππον, ὃς ἕνα με ἡγεῖτο τῶν υἱέων [...] ἔστι δέ τις ἄνθρωπος ἐν Κύρῳ Μάρης, μᾶλλον πένης ἢ γέρων, ἔστι δὲ καὶ μάλα γέρων. ὃν μὴ παντάπασιν ἐκτριβῆναι δέονται μὲν οὗτοι, βούλομαι δὲ ἐγώ, κύριος δὲ σύ.

[30] In 355–362 Libanius frequently approached Modestus 2.

[31] Ἀμειβόμενος δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα παρά τε τὸν Μόδεστον εἰσάγω καὶ πάλιν εἰσάγω παρὰ σὲ διὰ γραμμάτων νομίζων ταύτην ἐκείνης οὐ λείπεσθαι τὴν χάριν. The translation of πάλιν is based on LSJ, πάλιν, III, meaning that the introduction to Modestus is followed by the one to the current addressee, Cyrillus 1. This interpretation suits well with the rest of the phrase (νομίζων ταύτην ἐκείνης οὐ λείπεσθαι τὴν χάριν). However, if πάλιν is translated as 'again' (LSJ, πάλιν, II), it would imply that Libanius is now referring to a second intervention with Cyrillus. Such a reading is less reconcilable with the rest of the sentence.

[32] The recommendation letter itself can mainly be situated in the second stage, because a letter writer would argue his case, for example, by asking a favour, voicing his expectations or suggesting a line of conduct.

feared he had to explain why he did not bring along any letter'
(Lib., *Ep*. 124.1).[33]

(ii) the letter writer: 'I rejoice with your efforts and risks on
our behalf. Probably you will receive the goodwill of the gods by
this. They want that children endure everything for their parents'
(Lib., *Ep*. 936.1).[34] The letter writer tries to gain ascendancy over
Priscianus 1 by comparing the latter's efforts for him to those that
are undertaken by children for their parents.[35]

(iii) the addressee: 'You would certainly like to be praised, he
has the power to do so. He will receive deeds from you and you
will get orations from him [...]' (Lib., *Ep*. 312.2).[36]

(iv) a more powerful person: 'Perhaps you could obtain some
result, because this case consists of so many rightful elements. Even
if these elements seem insignificant to the opponents, the emperor,
however, will consider them important' (Lib., *Ep*. 903.2).[37]

2.3. Reaction after the Recommendation Letter is Delivered

A third stage consists of the (first) reaction of the addressee after
a recommendation letter was delivered to him. The aim of such a
letter is to show to the petitioner that the addressee is in earnest
about the intervention. It could also allow the addressee to gain
time to deal with the request. The receiver of the request is either
Libanius or another person.

(i) When Libanius receives the request, his reactions do not
differ so much from the arguments that he adduces when he acts
as the intervening person. The letters demonstrate that his actions
are likewise based on friendship, even on an intergenerational one.

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[33] Νῦν δ' αὖθις παρὰ σὲ τρέχων ἔσπευσε γράμματα φέρειν οὐχ ὡς οὐκ ἤδη παρὰ
σοὶ τοσοῦτος ὢν ὥστε κἂν ἄλλου πρὸς σὲ μνησθῆναι μετὰ θάρσους, ἀλλ' εἰδώς, ὅτι τοῖς
παρ' ἡμῶν ἡδίων γίνη γράμμασιν, ἔδεισε μὴ δίκην ἀπαιτηθῇ τοῦ μὴ κομίζειν. The trans-
lation of ἄλλου πρὸς σὲ μνησθῆναι is based on LSJ, μιμνήσκω, B, 4, 2.

[34] Συγχαίρω σοι τῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καὶ πόνων καὶ κινδύνων, ἀφ' ὧν εἰκὸς εἶναί σοι τὴν
τῶν θεῶν εὔνοιαν, οἳ βούλονται πάντα ὑπομένειν παῖδας ὑπὲρ πατέρων.

[35] This pre-eminence is clearly meant to incite Priscianus to take action.

[36] Καὶ μὴν σὺ μὲν ἐπαινεῖσθαι βούλοιο ἄν, τούτῳ δὲ ἐπαινεῖν δύναμις. ἔσται δὴ τῷ
μὲν ἔργα παρὰ σοῦ, σοὶ δὲ παρὰ τοῦδε λόγοι [...].

[37] Τάχα γὰρ ἄν τι καὶ δυνηθείης τοσούτων ὄντων ἐν τῷ πράγματι δικαίων, ἃ εἰ καὶ
τούτοις μικρὰ φαίνεται, ἀλλὰ μεγάλα γε εἶναι δόξει τῷ μεγάλῳ βασιλεῖ. In this case, the
argument of a more powerful person is used in order to overcome the rivalry of
his opponents.

Rhetorical education or being part of an important family are also valuable assets for him: 'I experienced what you wrote to me. Your letter made me immediately look to Cleopater with sympathy. I could feel but regard for the letter when I tested the young man, yet his qualities convinced me more' (Lib., *Ep.* 279.1).[38]

(ii) The request is received by another person: Libanius advises his recommendee, for whom he had written the intervention. By emphasising the merits of the addressee, he wants to showcase his own role in the process, or reassure his recommendee about certain apprehensions that the latter might have had.

Libanius explains the vigorous attitude of Hierocles 3, who received the intervention, to his recommendee (Anthius):[39] 'I procured you an ally who would even go through fire on my behalf. Either, if you need to receive an additional favour, he will be eager to do so, or if a distressing situation needs to be solved, he will not shrink from it, or if he has to convince another governor to do justice to you, he will not even shun this' (Lib., *Ep.* 395.1–2).[40]

2.4. Informing Others

Fourthly, Libanius advises other persons, once the request had been conferred.[41] The message was intended either for his recommendee, the addressee and/or the wider public. It is reasonable to suppose that Libanius did not act disinterestedly when he informed others of a successful outcome. His purpose was to draw attention on this intervention and subtly underscore his own role in the process.[42]

(i) Libanius informs his recommendee: 'Your worries have come to an end. They have come to an end thanks to the efforts of Mariades. I also received the letter informing that the dangers had

[38] Ἔπαθον ὃ ἐπέσταλκας· εὐθὺς μὲν ἡδέως τὸν Κλεόπατρον εἶδον διὰ τὴν ἐπιστολήν, πειρώμενος δὲ τοῦ νεανίσκου τὴν μὲν ἐπιστολὴν οὐκ εἶχον μὴ αἰδεῖσθαι, τοῖς παρ' αὐτοῦ δὲ πλέον εἱλκόμην.

[39] This letter has not been preserved.

[40] Ἀλλ' ἐξεύρηκά γε σύμμαχον, ὃς ἐμήν γε χάριν κἂν διὰ πυρὸς ἔλθοι. εἴτε οὖν δεῖ σοί τι προσγενέσθαι ἀγαθόν, προθυμήσεται εἴτε λυθῆναι λυπηρόν, οὐκ ἀποκνήσει εἴθ' ἕτερον ἄρχοντα πεῖσαι τὰ δίκαια πρὸς σὲ ποιεῖν, οὐδὲ τοῦτο φεύξεται.

[41] Often, the vague context does not allow for definitely assigning a letter to this or the previous stage.

[42] The (unintended) result of it was that the letter writer could also obfuscate failures in other cases, since the attention was being diverted to manifest successes.

ceased [...]' (Lib., *Ep.* 592.1).[43] In this letter he explains that the recommendee's problems (Sabinus 5) had ended.

(ii) Libanius informs the addressee about the recommendee's reaction: 'The gentle Cyrus, who vanquished many diseases with his art, came to me in a hurry, and was very glad. When I asked him why he was in such a mood, he answered me that he was now free from fear, he could breathe again, since he had escaped a big wave. When he explained to me what was this evil, I asked him again who calmed this wave. He then applauded and told that it was your person who had already rescued countless individuals, a better refuge than anyone else' (Lib., *Ep.* 1027.1–2).[44]

(iii) Libanius informs other people: 'I knew this beforehand and foretold what would come about. I was glad with what happened. I will report to all, who you are and what is your attitude towards justice and towards myself' (Lib., *Ep.* 1281.1).[45]

2.5. The Decisive Role of the Addressee

The fifth stage is illustrated by a large group of letters that show the importance of the addressee in accomplishing the request. This is probably the most important moment in the entire recommendation process. The purpose of these letters is to highlight the influence of the addressee. Moreover, the letter writer frequently focuses on the favours provided by the addressee, or more generally praises or thanks him. Frequently, these laudatory words or acknowledgements are linked to encouragements and exhortations to further action. In this way, Libanius managed to imperceptibly transmit the expectations he was harbouring for forthcoming requests.

An interesting example is the case of Palladius 18, whose role in the entire process is acknowledged: 'You showed us both

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[43] Λέλυταί σοι τὰ δυσχερῆ, λέλυται δὲ τοῖς Μαριάδου πόνοις. καὶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἤδη τῶν δεινῶν πεπαυμένων ἐλάμβανον [...].

[44] Κῦρος ὁ χρηστός, ὁ πολλῶν κρατήσας τῇ τέχνῃ νοσημάτων, εἰσῆλθε παρ' ἐμὲ τρέχων τε καὶ περιχαρής. ἐρομένου δέ μου, τίσιν οὕτω διατεθείη, φόβου τε ἐλεύθερος ἔφασκε γεγενῆσθαι καὶ ἀναπεπνευκέναι κῦμα διαφυγὼν μέγα. διδάξαντος δέ, ὅ τι ἦν τὸ κακόν, πάλιν ἠρόμην· τίς δὲ ὁ τοῦτο στορέσας; ὁ δὲ εἶπε κροτῶν ἅμα τὴν σὴν κεφαλήν, ἣ μυρίους ἤδη σέσωκε κάλλιον παντὸς λιμένος.

[45] Καὶ προῄδειν ταῦτα καὶ προεῖπον ὡς ἔσται καὶ γενομένων ἥσθην καὶ πρὸς ἅπαντας ἀπαγγελῶ, τίς σὺ καὶ περὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ πρὸς ἐμέ.

things in the case of Dionysius: after putting an end to the danger, you are making sure that "he becomes conspicuous among all the Argives" and acquires fame' (Lib., *Ep*. 1238.2; trans. Cribiore 2015).[46] In another letter words of thanks are followed by praise of the addressee: 'I thank you for what Numenius and Dionysius received. I praise you because you give favours and observe the laws [...] You tuned the lyre in such a way that at the same time the laws maintain their strength and there is room for humanity' (Lib., *Ep*. 1249.1).[47]

In all likelihood, the full recommendation process as reconstructed above—or even only a part of it—would probably have applied to a limited number of recommendations. As a matter of fact, not everyone might have had the time or opportunity or was strong enough to effectively approach a powerful figure; arguments to plea for benefits might have been absent; a letter writer might have had his particular reasons not to intervene (at a certain level) or to remain silent about an intervention or decision.

The recommendation process procures a glimpse or allows us to better understand how a letter writer tried to promote the interests of his recommendee. The merits of a case, intentions and efforts of the persons involved largely determined the outcome of a recommendation. It is clear that its personal network played an important role, since a broad range of options were open for a powerful individual to exert influence.

3. *Recommendation Letters Written to a Main Office Holder and Another Individual*

A second argument—besides the recommendation process—points to the existence of a personal network. When a letter writer tried to approach a leading office holder, he might reckon that his chances were not assured in advance. Therefore, in order to assure that his case was given all attention, a letter writer would simultaneously address a recommendation to the office holder himself

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[46] Σὺ δ' ἡμῖν ἄμφω περὶ τὸν Διονύσιον ἐπεδείξω καὶ παύσας τὸν κίνδυνον σκοπεῖς, ὅπως ἔκδηλος μετὰ πᾶσιν Ἀργείοισι γένοιτο καὶ δόξαν ἐνέγκαιτο.

[47] Καὶ ὧν Νουμήνιος ἔτυχεν ἔχω σοι χάριν καὶ ὧν Διονύσιος. καί σε ἐπαινῶ καὶ διδόντα χάριτας καὶ τηροῦντα τοὺς νόμους. [...] σὺ δ' οὕτως ἡρμόσω τὴν λύραν ὥσθ' ὁμοῦ καὶ νόμων ἰσχὺς καὶ φιλανθρωπίας τόπος.

and to a member of his staff, or another influential individual residing in the same city.[48] The office holder was then approached in two ways, directly and through a third person. In this way, the letter writer tried to enhance his chances for success.

This large group can best be split into two parts, mainly because a member of staff could be directly involved in the decision making process, whereas the arguments of power and influence in the second group show that there existed a merely functional and not a hierarchical relationship between both addressees.

3.1. Main Office Holder and a Member of Staff

Libanius—more than other late antique epistolographers—typically approached a main office holder and a member of his staff, when writing for the same recommendee.

Case	Main office holder	Subordinate official
Libanius		
Cleobulus 1, Egyptian poet *Epp.* 52, 67, 68, 90 and 91	Themistius 1	Clearchus 1, *Assessor* to Themistius (probably)
Zenobius, *Eirenophylax* *Epp.* 101–02	Modestus 2, *Comes Orientis*	Urbanus 3, *Assessor* to Modestus
Calliopius 2, Assessor of a governor *Epp.* 214–15	Priscianus 1 Governor of Euphratensis	Ammianus 3, *Assessor* to Priscianus (possibly)
Pelagius 1 *Epp.* 1200–01	Domitianus 4 Governor of Euphratensis	Euethius 1, *Assessor* to Domitianus (presumably)
Alexander 9, *Agens in rebus* *Epp.* 1505–06 and 1521–22	Decentius 1, *Magister Officiorum*	Ammianus 3, *Assessor* to Decentius (probably)
Ammianus, Eusebius and Artemisius, *Epp.* 1530–31	Domninus 2, Governor of Phoenice	Hermogenes 5, *Assessor* to Domninus 2 (probably)
Gregory of Nazianzus		
Nicobulus 1, nephew of Gregory of Nazianzus *Epp.* 146–48	Olympius 10, Governor of Cappadocia	Asterius 4, *Assessor* to Olympius 10

[48] In some cases, however, Libanius only wrote to the member of staff. He would probably have reckoned that it was maybe more efficient 'to take the less prestigious way': *Ep.* 207 for Hilarius 4, and *Epp.* 226 and 227 in favour of Acontius.

The letter writer had different strategies when addressing his recommendation to two office holders. Much depended on the epistolographer's personal efforts or engagement with the case. His attempts to specifically approach the one who would be most instrumental in realising the request highlight the functioning of his personal network.

a. Two examples demonstrate that the main office holder probably was most helpful in accomplishing the demand. Libanius' letters *Epp*. 101–02 for Zenobius, *Eirenophylax* in Elusa, relative and namesake of Libanius' teacher, are a first instance. The first letter (written to Modestus) that is substantially longer than the subsequent one, conveys the impression that Libanius is at (great) pains to justify his intervention and, accordingly, to convince Modestus of the soundness of his request.[49]

In the short *Ep*. 102 arguments are put forward that have more to do with the nature of the intervention itself. Libanius invites Urbanus to discuss the issue with Modestus in order to make sure that the latter would not change a decision of his inferior. Specifically, he asks the addressee to maintain written contact with Modestus when he is absent:[50] 'And if you give him back his piece of land, make sure that the governor is mild with him, either by speaking with the governor when he is present or by writing him

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[49] It would lead too far to quote Libanius' explanation and justification in its entirety. The basic idea is that Libanius expects Modestus, since he had granted previous demands, also to accede to the current request. See Lib., *Ep*. 101.2: 'However my assurance for obtaining my present request I believe lies in the fact that I have obtained many even before now, [...] whereas if you have often been of service to someone, you cannot thereafter reject him' (trans. Norman 1992). In the period 359–360 Libanius wrote eight recommendations to Modestus.

[50] Jones 1964, p. 374: 'The duties of the vicars' (the *Comes orientis* was one of the 12 *vicarii*) 'are less easy to define. They acted as judges of appeal for the courts of their provincial governors, and exercised a general supervision over their administration'. Although little is known about these mid-level authorities, their supervising role probably entailed a considerable amount of travel within the diocese. Such a journey might be compared to the annual tour of the governor performing routine judicial and administrative duties within his province (*conventus*). During the *vicarius*' absence, regular business would not stop. It implied that an assessor had a part in the decision making process. The extent to which a decision (or the preparation of it) would be delegated to a member of staff inevitably varied, since it would depend on how well the main official trusted his subordinate. Probably, a blanket delegation would hardly be conceivable.

when he is absent [...]' (Lib., *Ep.* 102.2).[51] When Libanius stresses the need to discuss the case with the *Comes Orientis* (either orally or in written), it was because he realised—this is hinted at in *Ep.* 101—that the *Comes Orientis* would not easily allow the request.

In another letter set (Lib., *Epp.* 1530–31), the critical role of the governor does not immediately emerge, but is only hinted at. These introductions concerned Ammianus and his two brothers. The brothers had an estate in the province of Phoenice that seemed to be disputed. For this case, Libanius approached the governor of the province and one of his assessors. *Ep.* 1530 has the aim to put the recommendees under the protection of the governor: 'I wish that that they and their brother-in-law, another Ammianus, are reckoned among those who are known by you' (Lib., *Ep.* 1530.2).[52] In the next letter the element of intervention is less present, since the brothers are only briefly presented to the recipient of the letter: 'Entrust this brother-in-law and the two brothers of Ammianus to your care' (Lib., *Ep.* 1531.1).[53]

Apparently, the brothers were expected to provide information to the assessor that was not written down in the letter: 'Allow them [...] to say what they should need to communicate' (Lib., *Ep.* 1531.3),[54] whereas the letter written to the governor does not mention any letter carrier or oral message. An explanation could be that both letters were given to the assessor, who would also hear the oral communication. During this conversation, the brothers would ask him to serve as intermediary between themselves and the governor. One of the reasons could be that they thought the hierarchical distance to the governor was too big.

b. In *Ep.* 1522.1 Libanius highlights the decisive role of the assessor after he sent out the two recommendation letters: 'I thank

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[51] Κἂν ἀποδῷς αὐτῷ τὴν χώραν, καὶ τὸν ἡγεμόνα αὐτῷ προσκατασκεύασον πρᾷον ἢ παρόντι διαλεχθεὶς ἢ γράψας ἀπόντι·[...]. I do not think that παρόντι and ἀπόντι refer to αὐτῷ. If it were so, it would mean that the assessor was requested to maintain contact with Zenobius, which does not make any sense here.

[52] Τούτους τε οὖν καὶ ἔτι γε κηδεστὴν αὐτῶν, Ἀμμιανὸν ἕτερον, βουλοίμην ἂν ἐν τοῖς ἐγνωσμένοις ὑπὸ σοῦ τετάχθαι.

[53] Τοῦτόν τε οὖν τὸν κηδεστὴν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς Ἀμμιανοῦ τοὺς δύο παρακαταθήκην ἔχε.

[54] Δίδου [...] καὶ ὅτου δέοιντο φράζειν.

both, Idomeneus and Meriones. It is obvious that this Meriones contributed his part in it. He reminded, incited and praised the one who was ready (to take a decision)'.[55] It suggests that the subordinate official was the one who specifically dealt with the case, or at least prepared the decision, which had to be taken by the higher ranking office holder.

c. Finally a last example are three interventions of Gregory of Nazianzus (*Epp*. 146–48) in favour of his nephew Nicobulus, who was charged for an offence committed by his slaves. Gregory of Nazianzus had to deal not only with personal networks, but also with conflicting interests. The first letter is addressed to Olympius 10, governor of Cappadocia Secunda, while his assessor Asterius 4 received *Epp*. 147 and 148.

In the first letter Gregory asks the governor to be a benevolent judge: 'Present yourself as a benevolent judge for those who are disturbed, since today you do not only judge between persons, but also between virtue and vice' (Greg. Naz., *Ep*. 146.7).[56] He attempts to give a more solemn character to the case, presenting it as a choice between good and evil. By putting the case on a higher level, Gregory appealed to Olympius' conscience and, in this way, did not give him much leeway. It is, however, doubtful whether it had the aimed effect, since it seems that Gregory's position lacked credibility, as he had previously defended Nicobulus' opponent: 'I am ashamed at defending before your Rightness the man for whom I lately fought' (Greg. Naz., *Ep*. 146.4).[57] In the next letter Gregory asks the assessor to intercede with the governor: 'This man, we hand him over into your hands, and through you into the governor's hands [...]' (Greg. Naz., *Ep*. 147.3).[58] Apparently, the aim of Gregory's intervention was to prevent the case from getting a criminal (public) character, also because the epistolographer clearly considered it a private affair.[59] Yet, the letter

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[55] Ἀμφοτέροις οἶδα χάριν, καὶ τῷ Ἰδομενεῖ καὶ τῷ Μηριόνῃ. δῆλον γὰρ ὡς συνεισήνεγκε μέρος οὗτος ὁ Μηριόνης ἀναμνήσας, ἐπεγείρας, ἐπαινέσας τὸν προθυμούμενον.

[56] [...] φιλάνθρωπον σεαυτὸν παράσχου τοῖς κινουμένοις κριτήν, ὡς οὐκ ἀνθρώποις μόνον δικάζων σήμερον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρετῇ καὶ κακίᾳ.

[57] Αἰσχύνομαι γὰρ κατηγορεῖν ἐπὶ τῆς σῆς ὀρθότητος οὗ πρώην ὑπερεμάχουν.

[58] Τοῦτον ὑπὸ τὰς σὰς τίθεμεν χεῖρας, καὶ διὰ τῶν σῶν ταῖς τοῦ ἄρχοντος [...].

[59] As explained by Gallay, the editor of Gregory's letters (p. 40, note 1).

to Asterius seems to have been to no effect and, thus, in *Ep*. 148 Gregory repeats his request in rather insisting terms, by advancing arguments that deal more with the addressee himself than with Nicobulus: 'Use with God's help all your friendship, intelligence and power on our behalf' (Greg. Naz., *Ep*. 148.5).[60] After a first and unsuccessful attempt, the letter writer by bringing forward stronger arguments, intended to convince Asterius to grant the petition.

At first sight, it might seem surprising that Asterius, and not Olympius was approached by Gregory for a second time. As Gregory had already written to the governor for several (other) cases, he could reasonably not expect his addressee to accede to every request.[61] Therefore, he had to carefully consider how he would phrase this intervention and whether he would eventually contemplate a second intervention. It was important for him not to endanger this and (possibly) future cases.[62] Gregory's hesitating attitude might also point to the fact that his status was not wholly unchallenged at that moment. Gregory's posture has to been seen against the background of his position in Cappadocia after his (humiliating) return from Constantinople.[63] Another element was, as I explained earlier, that Gregory's current intervention was negatively tainted by his recent defence of Nicobulus' opponent. For all these reasons the letter writer probably considered it preferable to approach Asterius, all the more so since this was

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[60] Καὶ χρῆσαι πάσῃ τῇ φιλίᾳ καὶ τῇ συνέσει καὶ τῷ δύνασθαι σὺν Θεῷ περὶ τὰ ἡμέτερα πράγματα.

[61] McLynn 2014, p. 48: 'In his collected correspondence Gregory included thirteen letters addressed to Olympius; all of these relate to the latter's term of office, which ran roughly from mid-382 to mid-383. Most of the letters are intercessions'.

[62] Gregory might have had this in mind in *Ep*. 146.1: 'This was what I used to say [...] that I feared to empty your humanity in other's cases'.

[63] McLynn 2001, p. 193: 'After the humilating loss of his position in the capital, Gregory faced the very difficult task of constructing a commensurate (or at least compensating) authority at home, independently of the ecclesiastical hierarchy'. However, Van Dam 2002, p. 85 assumes that 'once back in Cappadocia, Gregory resumed his standing as a prominent local notable. Not only was he a landowner, and the scion of a prominent family, but he was a former bishop of Constantinople. He corresponded with a wide range of imperial magistrates, and he still received an invitation to attend a council directly from the Emperor Theodosius'.

a channel that had already demonstrated its efficiency.[64] Greg. Naz., *Ep*. 146 to the governor also shows that when a letter writer wrote multiple interventions (on behalf of different persons), it could sometimes lead to a 'conflict of interest' which, however, did not prevent Gregory from acting.[65] The interventions prove that the conflicting interests converged in the person of Gregory himself who, seemingly, had found ways to get around with it.

3.2. Main Office Holder and Another Influential Individual Residing in the Same City[66]

Another noteworthy element are letters written to an office holder and another leading person residing in the same city, of which I found numerous examples in late antique epistolographers.[67]

Case	Main office holder	Other influential person
Libanius		
Dulcitius, unknown figure *Epp*. 520–21	Sebastianus 2, *Praefectus Aegypti*	Cataphronius 1, *Dux Aegypti*
Theodorus, native of Antioch *Epp*. 831–32	Modestus 2 *Praefectus urbi Constantinopolitanae*	Nicocles sophist in the capital
Euthymius, a poor *advocatus* *Epp*. 974–75	Siburius 2, Governor of Palaestina	Gamaliel, Patriarch of the Jews
Apringius, *advocatus* embarking on law study *Epp*. 1170–71	Marius 1, Governor of Phoenice	Domnio 1, Teacher of law in Berytus

(cont.)

[64] In *Ep*. 147.3, Gregory hints at his previous interventions—apparently for more serious cases—that turned out to be successful (unless it is assumed that this is a pure rhetorical trope): 'We considered a very strange thing that whilst our intervention cleared others from the most serious accusations [...]'. It (partly) contradicts McLynn 2014, p. 56: 'There is no indication, significantly, that Gregory had known Asterius before Olympius' term'.

[65] It is interesting to draw a parallel with modern law practice: in many countries law practitioners have the statutory obligation, when acting on behalf of their clients, to avoid any conflict of interest that might result from previous cases.

[66] In several cases Libanius and Symmachus—and to a far lesser extent Gregory of Nazianzus and Synesius—wrote three or more letters for the same recommendee. Very frequently, the recipients resided in the same city. Such letter sets give a clear idea of the functioning of the writer's network.

[67] I did not list all the examples in Symmachus' letter corpus. For a discussion of several of those sets, see Marien 2018, p. 194–222.

Case	Main office holder	Other influential person
Libanius		
Severus 9, sophist *Epp.* 1478–79	Aphobius, Governor of Palaestina	Acacius 6, Sophist in Caesarea
Marcianus 6, student of Libanius *Epp.* 1511–12	Decentius 1 *Magister Officiorum*	Iovinus 1, *Comes sacrarum largitionum* or *Comes rei privatae*
Basilius		
Gregory of Nazianzus *Epp.* 32–33	Sophronius 3, *Magister Officiorum*	Aburgius, *Comes rei privatarum* or *Quaestor sacri Palatii*
Maximus 23, *Praeses Cappadociae Primae* *Epp.* 147–49	Trajanus 2, *Comes rei militaris*	Aburgius, *Comes rei privatarum* or *Quaestor sacri Palatii*
Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata *Epp.* 177–78	Sophronius 3, *Magister Officiorum*	Aburgius, *Comes rei privatarum* or *Quaestor sacri Palatii*
Gregory of Nazianzus		
Helladius and Eulalius, cousins of the letter writer *Epp.* 14–15	Caesarius 3, Office holder in Cappadocia	Lollianus, A prominent Cappadocian
Amphilochius 4/iii, holding an unspecified office *Epp.* 22–24	Sophronius 3, *Magister Officiorum*	Caesarius 1 *Praefectus urbi Constantinopolitanae* (probably), Themistius 1
Eudoxius 1, rhetor in Cappadocia *Epp.* 37–38	Sophronius 3, *Magister Officiorum*	Themistius 1
Nicobulus 1, nephew of Gregorius of Nazianzus *Epp.* 126–27	Olympius 10, Governor of Cappadocia	Helladius 2, Bishop of Caesarea (probably)
Sacerdos, fellow priest *Epp.* 168–70	Palladius 12, *Magister officiorum*	Photius, office holder Strategius, further unknown
Synesius		
Diogenes 2, cousin of Synesius, *Dux Lybiae superioris* (?) *Epp.* 118 and 131	Troilus 1 Sophist in Constantinople	Pylaemenes, *Advocatus* in Constantinople
Sosenas, further unknown *Epp.* 43 and 102	Anastasius 2 (PLRE II), a powerful person in Constantinople	Pylaemenes, *Advocatus* in Constantinople

Case	Main office holder	Other influential person
Symmachus		
Felix, official of undetermined rank *Epp*. III, 72 and IV, 73	Flavius Timasius, *Comes et magister equitum*	Flavius Eusignius, *Praefectus praetorio Italiae et Illyrici*
Stemmatius, senator *Epp*. III, 73 and IV, 67	Flavius Timasius, *Comes et magister equitum*	Flavius Eusignius, *Praefectus praetorio Italiae et Illyrici*
Gaudentius 3 *Epp*. IV, 38 and VII, 45	Minervius 2, *Comes rerum privatarum*	Rufus Synesius Hadrianus 2 (possibly), *Magister Officiorum*
Benedictus 1, official in the West *Epp*. IV, 53 and IX, 1	Florentinus 2, *Notarius*	Palladius 12, Teacher of rhetoric summoned to court
Augustine		
Faventius, tenant farmer of Augustine *Epp*. 115–16	Generosus 1 (PLRE II), Governor of *Numidia*	Fortunatus, Bishop of Cirta

Three examples clearly demonstrate the writer's network in action. The different rhetorical strategies used by the epistolographer are meant to promote the interests of his recommendee. The first instance will show that the letter writer puts forward the arguments that valued most for each of the addressees. The second one will reveal that the letter writer made a sharp distinction between the direct and indirect influence of an addressee. Finally, the third case will make clear that the expectations laid upon the addressee are expressed differently according to the social status of the latter. Contrary to the letters written to a main office holder and a member of staff, there is no hierarchical relation between the addressees of the same letter set. It also suggests that in these cases the letter writer was less restricted in how he would formulate his arguments to convince the letter recipient.

a. In 365 Libanius wrote *Epp*. 1478 and 1479 for Severus, who was a fellow student of him in Athens, and later became a sophist teaching in Lycia. Severus carried both letters when he travelled to Palaestina. He handed *Ep*. 1478 to Aphobius, governor of this province; the recipient of the second letter is the sophist Acacius 6, who most probably was teaching in Caesarea, his mother city and the capital of the province.

Both documents are introduction letters that do not carry any request. In both cases Libanius focuses on the (seemingly unlimited) influence of the addressee: 'You are so devoted to those who share in education that you accomplished much of what seems to be impossible. I hope that also Severus will gain experience of it [...]' (Lib., *Ep*. 1478.2–3),[68] and

> And now he comes, and he is confident that he will receive what comes from you and what can be obtained through you. And if he should ask for something that is impossible among your friends, then your nod will suffice that all help him (Lib., *Ep*. 1479.3).[69]

Moreover, Libanius' arguments and praise are based on what each of the addressees would appreciate most: in the case of Aphobius, the excellent administration of the cities: 'However, he considers it important to see how Palaestina is governed by your rule. Prosperous cities are indeed a fine sight' (Lib., *Ep*. 1478.1),[70] and for Acacius, the value of a rhetorical education: 'This education rewarded him more than others. The fruits he gained from there, are not only rhetoric, but also friends. Thanks to friends he holds the whole world, which is better than his father city' (Lib., *Ep*. 1479.2).[71]

Undoubtedly, both letters had a similar purpose. Libanius aimed at introducing his recommendee and asking for something that maybe could not easily be obtained.[72] However, a pure rhetorical stance cannot be excluded, since Libanius wanted to fend off any hesitation or objection. Since the letters do not carry any specific request, it can be assumed that the letter carrier would orally

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[68] Περὶ δ᾽ αὖ τοὺς παιδείας μετέχοντας οὕτω πρόθυμος, ὥστε πολλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων εἶναι δοκούντων πέπρακταί σοι. τούτου λήψεσθαι πεῖραν καὶ Σευῆρον ἐλπίζω.

[69] Καὶ νῦν ἔρχεται πιστεύων ἕξειν τὰ μὲν παρὰ σοῦ, τὰ δὲ διὰ σοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἂν τῶν ἀδυνάτων τι τῶν παρ᾽ ὑμῖν δέηται, νεῦμα σὸν ἀρκέσει πάντας αὐτῷ δοῦναι συνεργούς.

[70] Μέγα μέντοι καὶ τοῦτο ποιεῖται, τὴν Παλαιστίνην ὑπὸ τῆς σῆς γνώμης ἀγομένην ἰδεῖν· ἡδὺ γὰρ θέαμα πόλεις εὐδαιμονοῦσαι.

[71] Καὶ γέγονέν οἱ πλέον ἢ τοῖς ἄλλοις παρ᾽ ἐκείνου καρπός. καρπὸς δὲ ἐκεῖθεν οὐ λόγοι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ φίλοι, δι᾽ οὓς πᾶσαν γῆν ἔχει τῆς πατρίδος οὐ χείρω.

[72] This clearly emerges from Lib., *Ep*. 1479.3: 'And if he should ask for something that is impossible among your friends, then your nod will suffice that all help him'.

explain the purpose of the letter. Therefore, Libanius focused on the unlimited influence, which was primarily meant to make the addressee more receptive to the request. The letter writer realised that the petition could be more easily accommodated, if arguments that counted for the addressee, were being put forward.[73]

b. The aim of Greg. Naz., *Epp.* 126 and 127, both of which date to 382, is to relieve Nicobulus, a relative of Gregory, from the office of surveyor of the *cursus publicus*.[74] Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 126, which is addressed to the Olympius 10, governor of the province, is one of the few letters in which the letter writer formulates a specific request: 'You should give him any other post that suits you' (Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 126.3).[75] Gregory argues that Nicobulus' physical and mental condition does not permit him to endure such kinds of activity: 'I found my son Nicobulus very distressed by the sorrows of letters and his staying there. He has a failing health, is not used to such activities and does not support the loneliness' (Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 126.3).[76] Since not only the request itself but also the justification is phrased in precise terms, this hints that Gregory addressed the letter to the person who was qualified to decide upon this specific demand. By contrast, in *Ep.* 127, addressed to Helladius 2, bishop of Caesarea,[77] the epistolographer limits himself to an imprecise request, asking that Nicobulus might receive a quiet post.[78] It seems that Gregory, since he phrased this petition in vague terms, considered the bishop an appropriate intermediary, who would certainly wield the necessary influence on the magistrate entitled to deal with this case. Gregory views this

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[73] As explained in the previous paragraph, in the case of the rhetor Aphobius the letter writer's arguments are *paideia* and rhetorical education, see Stenger 2014, p. 282: 'With letters as an extremely useful instrument for recommendation, it is quite natural that Libanius associates being Greek with *paideia* and eloquence to ensure that the receiver lends an ear for his request for aid'.

[74] As explained by Gallay in his edition of Gregory's letters (p. 17, footnote 1), Nicobulus held the office of *praefectus mansionis*.

[75] Τούτῳ πρὸς ἄλλο μὲν πᾶν ὅ τι ἂν ᾖ σοι φίλον χρήσασθαι θέλησον.

[76] Τὸν υἱὸν Νικόβουλον σφόδρα εὗρον τῇ τοῦ δρόμου φροντίδι καὶ τῇ τῆς μονῆς προσεδρείᾳ στενοχωρούμενον, ἄνθρωπον καὶ ἀσθενῆ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἀήθη καὶ τὴν ἐρημίαν οὐ φέροντα.

[77] He was the brother of Gregory of Nyssa and succeeded Basil in this bishopric.

[78] Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 127.3: Χρῄζει ἀπραγμοσύνης […].

intervention in a context of reciprocal favours and obligations: 'Since I approve the gain, I am indebted to a requital for our most venerable son Nicobulus (Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 127.3).[79] Apparently, he 'used' Helladius quite often as a means of advancing his requests: '[...] as if every time I obtained a last advantage' (Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 127.1).[80] Greg. Naz., *Epp.* 120.1 and 172.1 suggest that Helladius was probably not insensitive to Gregorius' requests, since these letters mention the bishop's answer to Gregory.

c. Symmachus' *Epp.* IV, 53 and IX, 1 are interventions written around 379 on behalf of Benedictus 1, an official in the West who had lost his position in the state administration. Florentinus 2, addressee of *Ep.* IV, 53 probably held the office of *notarius* when he received the intervention; the second letter was addressed to Palladius 12, who was probably head of a *scrinium* and, apparently, had easy access to the emperor.[81] According to both letters, the removal cannot be blamed on Benedictus, whose innocence is clearly stated.[82]

In *Ep.* IV, 53 Symmachus is seemingly convinced that his recommendation will have effect: 'I think that my letter has such a weight with you that it will allow me to hope for fulfilment [...]'.[83] This could mean that Symmachus considered his addressee to be of a lower status than himself, which implied for the letter writer that he was able to exert direct influence over him. This is also suggested by the fact that Symmachus straightforwardly requests

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[79] Ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὸ κέρδος ὁμολογῶ, χρεωστῶ τὴν ἀντίδοσιν τῷ αἰδεσιμωτάτῳ υἱῷ Νικοβούλῳ.

[80] [...] ὡς ἀεὶ τὰ τελευταῖα παρακερδαίνοντα. Helladius was a useful contact for Libanius, since the bishop was also approached for other cases (Greg. Naz., *Epp.* 120, 167 and 220). Moreover, *Epp.* 120.1 and 172.1 suggest that Helladius was probably not insensitive to Gregorius' requests, since the letters mention the bishop's answer to Gregory.

[81] Symm., *Ep.* IV, 53: '(It is important for the glory of this very splendid time that) the wishes and fates of all people experience the leniency of our very noble prince'.

[82] Symm., *Ep.* IV, 53: '[...] who, without being guilty of any crime, had been removed from his post by an injustice of fortune and lost his office'. and Symm., *Ep.* IX, 1: '[...] who rather by a misfortune than a mistake had been removed from his rank and official position, so that your aid smiles at an innocent [...]'.

[83] *Credo enim tanti apud te litteras meas esse momenti, ut effectum sperare fas fuerit* [...].

Florentinus' aid: '[...] that you have to help the condition of my friend Benedictus'.[84] Such an urgent appeal is clearly absent from *Ep.* IX, 1, in which Symmachus does not deal with the addressee in a direct manner, but in a more cautious way. He also mentions his long-standing friendship with Palladius and links it to reciprocal favours:[85] 'If the memory of an old friendship persists and no oblivion has weakened it, I think you will gladly receive my letter that I sent to you trusting in our mutual affection'.[86] Moreover, the eulogistic words for the emperor (*serenissimorum temporum gloria—clementia maximi principis*) are specifically aimed to put some pressure (in a veiled way) on Palladius.[87] The mention of the 'imperial policy' at the end of this letter implies that Symmachus (indirectly) also expects Palladius to become involved. This imperial policy, combined with the long-standing friendship between Symmachus and the addressee, probably made the latter realise that, if the emperor would not grant the request, this would affect his friendship with Symmachus.

4. *Conclusions*

In late antiquity, recommendations were an important means to obtain a position, patronage or other advantage. Since authorities often lacked effective instruments to distribute (human) resources in an objective way, personal networks were the primary way to obtain it.

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[84]   [...] *ut Benedicti amici mei fortunam debeas adiuvare.*

[85]   In or before 379, Palladius was a teacher of rhetoric in Rome. According to Macr., *Sat.* 5.1; 5.7 and Prud., *c. Symm.* 1.632–34, Symmachus was known for his eloquence. This might point to a common interest between the letter writer and addressee that could indeed explain their 'long-standing' friendship.

[86]   *Si amicitiae ueteris memoria perseuerat nec ulla obliuione tenuata est, credo quod litteras meas libenter accipias quas fiducia mutui amoris emisi.*

[87]   Although the theme of a new period (*novum saeculum*), characterised by justice (*iustitia temporum*) or glory (*gloria temporum*) and clemency of the emperor (*clementia*), frequently appears not only in Symmachus but also in other literature of the late fourth century, this theme is not used here merely as a rhetorical device but is Symmachus' way of declaring himself to be in agreement with the current imperial policy. It also appears in Symm., *Epp.* III, 73; IV, 19 and IV, 67.

Any holder of an influential office was probably inundated with numerous recommendations and requests and, therefore, faced an important workload in dealing with these petitions. Undoubtedly, he was regularly confronted with difficult choices, as he could not accede to every request he received.

The existing recommendation letters contain sufficient material to assume how personal networks centred around an important patron. The letter writer, who acted as a power broker, attracted individuals in pursuit of powerful benefactors. Several elements, such as the recommendation process or letters written simultaneously to a main office holder and another individual indicate how personal networks functioned in a context of recommendations. Such a personal network was often flexible and could be adapted to changing circumstances.

Firstly, a large recommendation process, which is clearly visible in Libanius' letters, permits to suppose that a powerful individual had many options to exert influence. The process could consist of five stages. It did not run along the lines of a fixed, established procedure, but allowed for personal initiative which largely depended on the merits of the case, the intentions and the efforts of the persons involved. These steps constitute an ideal model, since not every epistolographer might have had the opportunity or was influential enough to effectively approach a powerful figure.

Secondly, a letter writer could simultaneously address a recommendation letter to a main office holder and another individual (a member of staff or another influential person residing in the same city), as he would reckon that this was a better way for him to assure his chances for success. When both letters are addressed to an office holder, the letter writer would specifically approach the addressee that was most instrumental in realising the request. In the other case, the epistolographer had different rhetorical strategies to underline the addressee's influence. He could adduce the arguments that valued most for each addressee, make a difference between direct and indirect influence, or adapt the expectations laid upon the addressee according to the latter's status.

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Abstract

In late antiquity, recommendations were an important means to obtain a position or other advantage. Since authorities often lacked the effective instruments to distribute (human) resources, personal networks were the primary way to obtain it. Any holder of an influential office was probably inundated with numerous requests. The existing recommendation letters contain sufficient material to give an insight into personal networks centred around an important patron. The letter writer, who acted as a power broker, attracted individuals in pursuit of powerful benefactors. Several elements indicate how personal networks functioned in such a context. (1) the recommendation process, clearly visible in Libanius' letters, permits to suppose that a powerful individual had many options to exert influence. (2) a letter writer could simultaneously address a recommendation letter to a main office holder and another individual.

PART 4

ARTS AND SCIENCES

EVA FALASCHI

COMPETING (IN) ART

RIVALRY AMONG GREEK ARTISTS
AND ITS RECEPTION IN THE IMPERIAL AGE

1. *In and Out of the Workshop. Rivalry among Artists in Ancient Literature*

The history of art, in every period and place, is studded with disputes among artists as to who was the best artist and which was the best concept of art. Raphael and Michelangelo, Titian and Pordenone, Bernini and Borromini, Van Gogh and Gauguin, Picasso and Matisse are just some of the most famous examples of such rivalry. These controversies did not merely affect the relationships among artists; they have also dominated art criticism and the history of art.[1]

Also in the ancient world rivalry had an important role in the development of art and art history. Some disputes among Greek artists have become famous, such as the contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius to produce the most realistic painting,[2] the polemic between Zeuxis and Apollodorus,[3] or the competition among the sculptors Polycleitus, Phidias, Cresilas, Cydon and Phradmon to choose the best Amazon statue for the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.[4] In particular, among the artistic competitions, it is possible

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[1] On this issue see, for example, Liebert 1984; Goffen 2002; Rearick 2004; Morrissey 2005; Flam 2008; Humfrey 2006, esp. p. 51–52; Ilchman 2009; Romani 2013; Smee 2016; Dalla Costa 2016; Conte 2021.

[2] Gschwantler 1975; Corso 2016, p. 124.

[3] Settis 2008.

[4] On this competition, see, with further bibliography, Davison 2009, I, p. 1–20; Papini 2014, p. 158–78; Barbanera 2014, p. 20–27; Hallof, Kansteiner & Seidensticker 2014, p. 472–73; Hallof, Raeder & Seidensticker 2014, p. 284–86;

to distinguish between public competitions, which took place in front of the polis when a public announcement for the dedication of a new monument was made, personal contests between artists, and school competitions among students learning painting and among their teachers.[5]

In this contribution I would like to focus, through the analysis of a few case studies, on other aspects of rivalry among artists— that is, the presence of polemics in art treatises and the fortunes of some controversies in the literature of the Imperial Age.

1.1. Comparing and Judging Artists in Art Treatises

As can be inferred from the many known episodes, polemics, rivalry, competitions and friendship represented also for Greek artists an important moment in defying their own identity and the principles of their art, in establishing their own style and founding their 'schools', in choosing or finding out the best techniques, in expressing their own conception of art, and in determining the aims of art, the political and ethical function of artwork and the social role of artists. For these reasons, we should consider the hypothesis that rivalry found space also in the technical treatises written by artists, where they fixed the principles of their art and discussed their own artworks.[6] For example, according to Galen, Polycleitus conceptualised his *Canon*, maybe the *Doryphoros*, in a treatise which had the same name: 'Polycleitus supported his treatise with a work: he made a statue according to the tenets of his treatise, and called it *Canon*, like the book' (ὁ Πολύκλειτος ἔργῳ τὸν λόγον ἐβεβαίωσε δημιουργήσας ἀνδριάντα κατὰ τὰ τοῦ λόγου προστάγματα καὶ καλέσας δὴ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν ἀνδριάντα, καθάπερ καὶ τὸ σύγγραμμα, κανόνα).[7]

Hallof, Kansteiner, Krumeich, Lehmann & Seidensticker 2014, p. 340–41; Hallof, Kansteiner & Lehmann 2014, p. 591–92; Corso 2016, p. 123.

[5] On art competitions, see Kaltsas 2004; Corso 2012; Barbanera 2014; Corso 2016. On school competitions, see, with further bibliography, Donderer 1996; Del Corso 2007; Pollitt 2015, p. 380–82; Corso 2016; Falaschi 2020, p. 79–81.

[6] On art treatises, see, with further bibliography, Pollitt 1995; Lapatin 2012; Koch 2013, p. 67–200; De Angelis 2014; Pollitt 2015, p. 378.

[7] Galenus, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5. On Polycleitus' *Canon*, see (with further bibliography) Stewart 1978; Philipp 1990; Pollitt 1995; Koch 2013, p. 75–85; Hallof, Kansteiner & Seidensticker 2014, p. 477–87; Papini 2018; Adornato 2019a and 2019b.

In these treatises it could also happen that artists compared their own art with that of their predecessors and contemporaries. Since comparison is the basis of rivalry, in both a positive and a negative sense, it seems possible that polemics, disputes, rivalry or, in contrast, admiration and friendship were expressed in these treatises. For example, according to Pliny the Elder, Apelles in his *uolumina* on painting extensively discussed and admired the art of the main painters of his time, but also remarked that his own art was better regarding grace: he alone had reached that χάρις which was a characteristic of his personal style (*quorum opera cum admiraretur, omnibus conlaudatis deesse illam suam uenerem dicebat, quam Graeci χαριτα uocant; cetera omnia contigisse, sed hac sola sibi neminem parem*).[8] Among those artists were Melanthius, Asclepiodorus and Protogenes, whom Pliny mentions immediately after.[9]

These judgements did not stay within the walls of the workshops, but in some cases became famous. Apelles' treatise, for example, had a great impact on ancient art and art criticism: Pliny says that the painter changed the conception of painting also with his *uolumina*, which were no less important than his artworks (*picturae plura solus prope quam ceteri omnes contulit, uoluminibus etiam editis*).[10] Since he was considered an *auctoritas* in the field of painting and art history, his judgements on his rivals also became a reference point in the later centuries, as we will see in the case of his admiration of Protogenes' art.[11]

1.2. Beyond Art Treatises

Rivalry among artists had a wide reception in the ancient cultural system. Going on the number of polemics we know of and the quantity of sources, especially from the Imperial Age, that transmit them, these episodes of antagonism were quite popular in the ancient world. In fact, references are found in many philosophical, historical and rhetorical writings, such as Plutarch's *Moralia* and

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[8] Plinius, *Naturalis historia* [*nat.*] 35.79.

[9] Plinius, *nat.* 35.80. Of this opinion Jex-Blake & Sellers 1896, p. xl; Maass 1908, p. 44; Pfuhl 1923, p. 766; Ferri 1946, p. 162; Croisille 1985, p. 196–97. On Apelles' treatise see below.

[10] An echo of Apelles' judgement is present, for example, in Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.10.6: *ingenio et gratia, quam in se ipse maxime iactat, Apelles praestantissimus est.*

[11] On Apelles and Protogenes, see below.

Lives. In these works, they constitute not so much a reflection on the technical aspects of art as the assumption of an ethical, social and political value: they become, in other words, ethical examples. Therefore, these sources are fundamental in reconstructing the reception of artistic polemics not just in art criticism, but also, more in general, within the cultural system of those days.

On the other hand, there existed books dedicated to the biographies and activities of artists and which were written by intellectuals, not by artists. We have only scant information and few titles, such as Duris of Samos' *On Painting* (Περὶ ζωγραφίας)[12] and Juba's *On Painters/On painting* (Περὶ ζωγράφων / Περὶ ζωγραφίας).[13] These works were probably addressed to a wider audience and also had a less technical content, even though art treatises could be among their sources.[14] Polemics among artists, which were often connected to biographical episodes in artists' lives and careers, found a prolific ground also in these works, where they could also have been elaborated in a more narrative and anecdotic direction. These writings probably contributed to the circulation of the episodes of artistic rivalry and were one of the main sources on this topic.

Unfortunately, all artistic literature has been lost, although we find references to it in later authors, in particular in Pliny's *Natural History*. In fact, in the chapters dedicated to art history (books 33–36), polemics play an important role in defining the basis of ancient art history, for example in marking the difference between conceptions of art, techniques and styles, such as in the case of Pausias' restoration of a painting by Polygnotos in Thespiae,[15] or that of Pausias' small encaustic *lacunaria*.[16] They are

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[12] *FGrHist* 76 F 31 (Diogenes Laertius 1.38). See Landucci 2019.

[13] Harpocration, π 36 and 83 Keaney. See Falaschi 2021, p. 71–76.

[14] Art books dedicated to artists and their activity warrants more in-depth investigation. Their literary features, their content and their relationship with the biographical genre on the one hand, and with the art treatises on the other, will be addressed in Adornato & Falaschi (forthcoming b). See Falaschi 2021.

[15] Plinius, *nat*. 35.123: Pliny underlines that Pausias' restoration is not at the same level as Polygnotus' painting because this was not his genre (*multumque comparatione superatus existimabatur, quoniam non suo genere certasset*).

[16] Plinius, *nat*. 35.124: according to Pliny, Pausias' rivals (*aemuli*) said that he painted small *tabellae* because the encaustic technique took up too much time. So Pausias, in order to prove that they were wrong, painted one *tabella* in one day.

also used to emphasise the rivalry between *aemuli* in achieving the same aims, such as in the contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius,[17] or to tackle issues related to plagiarism among artists, such as with Apollodorus' accusation against Zeuxis.[18] Thus, Pliny's use of polemics leads us to an understanding of how they were received, elaborated and used in the literature of art history.

In this wide and articulated landscape, the analysis of individual episodes of rivalry enables the reconstruction of their reception in the later centuries and the evaluation of both their artistic value and their cultural impact.

2. *Friendship, Admiration and Competition.* *Apelles and Protogenes*

Friendship is often the other face of rivalry. A feeling of admiration and positive competition pervades, for example, the relationship between Apelles and Protogenes. Pliny celebrates their friendship from their first meeting. By his account, Apelles went to Rhodes, where Protogenes lived, with the intention to meet him—he knew him only by reputation—and to become acquainted with his work (*auidus cognoscendi opera eius fama tantum sibi cogniti*). This meeting, which marks an important moment in ancient art, occurred through a competition between the two artists. Apelles went to Protogenes' studio, but did not find the artist. He saw a panel already prepared for painting and, taking up a brush, painted an extremely fine line. When Protogenes saw it, he recognized that the visitor was Apelles, because of the perfection of that line, and he himself, using another colour, drew a still finer line exactly on the top of the first one and went away. Apelles came back, and, ashamed to be beaten, cut the lines with another in a third colour, leaving no room for any further display of minute work. Hereupon, Protogenes admitted he was defeated, and flew down to the harbour to look for the visitor.[19]

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[17] Plinius, *nat*. 35.65, see above. See also 35.64 where Parrhasius is defined *aemulus* of Zeuxis.

[18] Plinius, *nat*. 35.62. See Settis 2008. On plagiarism in ancient art, see Perry 2005.

[19] Plinius, *nat*. 35.81–83.

Pliny also adds that Apelles was generous with his rivals (*Apelles et in aemulis benignus*). In fact, he helped Protogenes to became famous and well paid in Rhodes (*Protogeni dignationem primus Rhodi constituit*): Protogenes was held in low esteem by his fellow citizens; then Apelles offered him fifty talents for some of his works and spread it about that he was buying them with the intention of selling them as works of his own (*quinquagenis talentis poposcit famamque dispersit, se emere, ut pro suis uenderet*). This device prompted the people of Rhodes to appreciate Protogenes (*ea res concitauit Rhodios ad intellegendum artificem*).[20]

Whether these episodes are true or false, Pliny testifies that in the Imperial Age this was the popular image of the relationship between the two painters. The panel with the lines which marked their first meeting existed until the beginning of the first century AD and was considered the tangible proof of the accuracy of the story. In fact, according to Pliny,[21] this painting was publicly displayed, probably in Rhodes (*placuitque sic eam tabulam posteris tradi omnium quidem, sed artificum praecipuo miraculo*), and later brought to Rome,[22] where it was burnt in the first fire that destroyed the palace of Caesar on the Palatine Hill[23] (*consumptam eam priore incendio Caesaris domus in Palatio audio*).

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[20] Plinius, *nat*. 35.88.

[21] Plinius, *nat*. 35.83.

[22] Cf. Corso, Mugellesi & Rosati 1988, p. 381 'Il quadro, lasciato da Protogene in eredità a una collezione pubblica, probabilmente rodiese (cf. il *tabulam posteris tradi*), era stato portato a Roma verosimilmente nella prima età augustea, come altre opere di Rodi (cf. XXXVI.34)'. It is impossible to say when the painting arrived in Rome, but it is worth remembering that at least another painting by Protogenes, *Ialysus*, was brought from Rhodes to Rome between the end of the first century BC and the first century AD and was displayed in the *Templum Pacis* at Pliny's times, see Falaschi 2018. Therefore, it is possible that the two paintings arrived together in Rome.

[23] According to Ferri (1946, ad loc.) and Corso, Mugellesi & Rosati 1988, p. 381, it is the *domus Augusti in Palatio*, to be identified with the so-called *Casa di Livia*; cf. also Jones 2019, p. 106. On this issue see also Croisille 1985, p. 199. On the *domus Augusti in Palatio*, see Iacopi 1995; Coarelli 2008, p. 167–72. Obviously, if we think of later fires (see note 24), we should consider later phases of the palace, but Pliny seems anyway to confirm that the painting was in the Imperial palace on the Palatine Hill, displayed together with other artworks, and that the guests had the chance to see it.

It is not clear which fire Pliny is referring to,[24] and it seems that he considered the information a rumour (*audio*), of which he is not sure.[25] However, according to the text transmitted in the manuscripts of *Natural History*, Pliny saw the painting (*spectatam nobis ante*),[26] probably in Rome. In the ancient art scene this painting was anomalous: indeed, according to ancient aesthetics, it could not be properly defined as a painting, but rather as a technical exercise.[27] This is probably why Pliny describes it: the wide surface

[24] Jex-Blake & Sellers 1896, ad loc., Ferri 1946, ad loc., König & Winkler 1978, p. 212 and Jones 2019, p. 106, n. 3 think that the fire dates to AD 3–4 (on this fire, see Werner 1906, p. 14–15). In contrast, Reinach 1921, p. 324, n. 1 and Corso, Mugellesi & Rosati 1988, p. 381 propose the fire of AD 64 (which was followed by a second fire in AD 69; on these fires, see Werner 1906, p. 19–28). Lugli 1960, p. 166 and Mielsch & Lehmann 2014, p. 141 choose the AD 41 fire which destroyed Caligula's palace (on this fire, see Werner 1906, p. 17–18), considering the Neronian AD 64 fire the second one. On this issue, see also Croisille 1985, p. 199, who refers to the different interpretations and leaves the question open. However, since Pliny was born around AD 23, if he really saw the painting (see below), he cannot be referring to the fire at Augustus' time.

[25] Reinach 1921, p. 324, n. 1 and Croisille 1985, ad loc. According to Jex-Blake & Sellers 1986, ad loc., this is an 'oral tradition'.

[26] Mayhoff 1897, ad loc. proposed to correct *nobis*, transmitted by manuscripts, with *Rhodi* '*an potius* orbi *uel* urbi, *ut III 17*'. This correction is accepted by König & Winkler 1978 and Mielsch & Lehmann 2014, but has been generally refused by Pliny's commentators, e.g., Jex-Blake & Sellers 1896 ('Formerly we might look upon it'); Reinach 1921, p. 325 ('J'ai vu jadis cette planche'); Ferri 1946 ('già prima ammirata dai Romani'); Corso, Mugellesi & Rosati 1988 ('In precedenza avevo avuto modo di vederlo'); Croisille 1985 ('Nous avions pu le contempler auparavant'). Ferri considers *nobis* a reference to the Romans, while the other editors, in my opinion correctly, relate it to Pliny himself. For Pliny's use of *nobis* in reference to himself, see, e.g., Plinius, *nat.* 35.128.

[27] See Corso, Mugellesi & Rosati 1988, p. 381 'Il fatto che un quadro con semplici linee senza immagini fosse stato portato a Roma ed esposto in una residenza imperiale presuppone che in ambito augusteo l'asportazione di opere d'arte potesse talora essere motivata, oltre che da altre ragioni, connesse col soggetto del dipinto, anche da un criterio estetico in senso stretto. Il fatto che a Roma vi fosse chi apprezzava più questa tela dei quadri con immagini parla a favore: 1) dell'esistenza nell'Urbe, in età augustea e giulio-claudia, di una ristretta cerchia di intenditori d'arte interessati ai capolavori in primo luogo nei loro aspetti formali; 2) della persistenza in quest'epoca di una concezione disegnativa (e dunque classicistica) della pittura'. Very critical towards Pliny's judgement appears Ferri 1946, ad loc. 'Plinio, che è privo di criterio artistico personale, apprezza solo il valore monetale dei monumenti, e l'ingenium e l'argumentum, si compiace di far rilevare, quando capitano, le situazioni paradossali in fatto d'arte, indulgendo bonariamente alle debolezze umane. In questo quadro non si vedeva quasi nulla, e perciò era più celebre; altrove (35, 91, 145) sono le opere non finite che attirano e accarezzano di più la morbosa curiosità del pubblico. L'ironia è più forte e sfer-

of the painting showed nothing else than some lines which were just visible (*spatiose nihil aliud continentem quam lineas uisum effugientes*). Pliny himself underlines the anomaly of that painting compared to the other artworks it was displayed with (*inter egregia multorum opera inani simile*) and points out that for this reason it attracted attention and was celebrated more than any other (*et eo ipso allicientem omnique opere nobiliorem*). Moreover, Pliny also adds that the decision to preserve the panel was intended to impress everyone, but especially the artists (*omnium quidem, sed artificum praecipuo miraculo*).

Therefore, this painting did not merely celebrate a famous and friendly competition between two of the greatest artists of ancient times, but had also become the symbol of an artistic search to draw the finest line and challenge the limits of art. In fact, at the core of this story was a technical issue, and, partly because of the particular nature of that panel, ancient viewers were aware of this: they admired the technique of the painting more than the art. As a consequence, even after its destruction its fame remained great, as was the artistic competition connected to it.

Another element probably contributed to defining the friendly rivalry between Apelles and Protogenes. In fact, we learn from Pliny that Apelles expressed his admiration for and friendship towards Protogenes, celebrating in particular his *Ialysus* for *diligentia*—that is, attention to detail (*aliam gloriam usurpauit, cum Protogenis opus inmensi laboris ac curae supra modum anxiae miraretur*).[28] Apelles said that in all respects Protogenes was as good as himself at painting, or even better, but he himself was better at knowing when to take his hand away from the picture (*dixit enim omnia sibi cum illo paria esse aut illi meliora, sed uno se praestare, quod manum de tabula sciret tollere, memorabili praecepto nocere saepe nimiam diligentiam*).

Plutarch also refers to a similar story: 'Apelles says that he was so stunned by the view of the work that his voice actually failed him, but that after a while said "Great is the toil and astonishing the work", remarking, however, that it had not the graces which

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zante, quando gli autori sono romani (36, 1 sgg.; 111 sgg.)'; see also Croisille 1985, ad loc., who embraces this view.

[28] Plinius, *nat*. 35.80.

made the fame of his own paintings touch the heavens' (καί φησιν ὁ Ἀπελλῆς οὕτως ἐκπλαγῆναι θεασάμενος τὸ ἔργον, ὥστε καὶ φωνὴν ἐπιλιπεῖν αὐτόν, ὀψὲ δ᾽ εἰπεῖν ὅτι 'μέγας ὁ πόνος καὶ θαυμαστὸν τὸ ἔργον', οὐ μὴν ἔχειν γε χάριτας δι᾽ ἃς οὐρανοῦ ψαύειν τὰ ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ γραφόμενα).[29]

From the comparison of Pliny's and Plutarch's account it is possible to conclude that Apelles probably expressed this judgement in his treatise on painting. In fact, Plutarch introduces Apelles' judgment with the expression καί φησιν Ἀπελλῆς—that is, he refers to it as something that Apelles himself narrated, probably in his book, since φησιν is the verb usually used to quote a written source. Moreover, Pliny presents Apelles as the author of *uolumina* on painting, where he also praised other painters, among them Protogenes for his *diligentia*: the description of his reaction to the *Ialysus* could be a way of praising it.[30]

It is therefore very plausible that this treatise contributed to the image of friendly rivalry between the two artists, which was popular in the Imperial Age, and maybe provided material for the biographical episodes on their relationship. In this perspective, we should also consider that Protogenes too wrote a treatise Περὶ γραφικῆς καὶ σχημάτων in two books,[31] in which he may well have dealt with Apelles and their relationship.

In conclusion, the Imperial Age shared the image of a good relationship and friendly rivalry between Apelles and Protogenes. Apelles' treatise on painting probably contributed to the creation of this image. According to this view, Apelles' admiration for Protogenes prompted him to help his rival to become famous. Artistic evidence of their competitive relation was brought to Rome, after being displayed in Rhodes. The painting was admired, not because it satisfied the aesthetic canons of beauty of that period, but rather because it embodied technical perfection and friendly rivalry.

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[29] Plutarch, *Demetrius* 22.6.

[30] For a more in-depth comparison of the two passages, see Falaschi 2015, p. 327–33; Falaschi 2021, p. 76–81.

[31] *Suda* π 2963, *s.v.* Πρωτογένης.

3. *Euphranor's and Parrhasius' 'Theseus'. Rivalry in Comparison*

A more bitter rivalry occurred between the painters Euphranor (4th century BC) and Parrhasius (5th–4th century BC). Scholars have noticed how the antagonism between the two artists could suggest a rivalry between painters of different generations: Parrhasius, in fact, was older than Euphranor.[32] In particular, I would like to focus on their *querelle* in relation to the representation of Theseus. Both artists did a painting of the Athenian hero. Euphranor's *Theseus* was displayed in the *Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios* in the *Agora* of Athens still at the time of Pausanias (ἐστι γεγραμμένος), and represented, according to this latter, *Theseus, Demokratia and Demos*.[33] We do not know where Parrhasius' *Theseus* was first displayed, although it has been suggested that it was in Athens.[34] However, we learnt from Pliny that it was brought to the Capitoline Hill (*pinxit et Thesea, quae Romae in Capitolio fuit*),[35] but probably we should infer from *fuit* that the painting did no longer exist when he wrote the *Natural History*.[36] It has also been proposed that a competition occurred between the two painters to create the *Theseus*: it is possible that the comparison between the paintings stemmed from an episode like that, but we do not have any evidence.[37]

According to Plutarch, Euphranor compared his own *Theseus* with that of Parrhasius, saying that Parrhasius' *Theseus* had fed on

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[32] Pfuhl 1923, p. 749–50; Bruno 1977, p. 99.

[33] Pausanias 1.3.3 ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τοίχῳ τῷ πέραν Θησεύς ἐστι γεγραμμένος καὶ Δημοκρατία τε καὶ Δῆμος. δηλοῖ δὲ ἡ γραφὴ Θησέα εἶναι τὸν καταστήσαντα Ἀθηναίοις ἐξ ἴσου πολιτεύεσθαι.

[34] Reinach 1921, p. 231, n. 3: 'Il résulte de la confrontation de ces textes (*sc.* Plinius, *nat.* 35.69 and 129; Plu. *Glor. Ath.* 346a; Plu. *Thes.* 4) que le Thésée de Parrhasios devait se trouver à Athènes, peut-être à la *Stoa de Zeus Eleuthérios*, en face de celui d'Euphranor'. The same conclusions in Ferri 1946, p. 155, based on Plutarch, *Theseus* 4. However, we do not have certain proofs of that.

[35] Plinius, *nat.* 35.69.

[36] Ferri 1946, p. 155 suggests that, if it was brought to Rome by Sulla, it was destroyed in the fire on the Capitoline Hill in AD 69 by the hand of Vitellius' supporters (Plinius, *nat.* 34.38 and, according to Ferri also *nat.* 33.154; however, Zehnacker 1983, p. 228 and Corso, Mugellesi & Rosati 1988, p. 95, n. 154.2 date the fire mentioned in this latter passage to 83 BC).

[37] Reinach 1921, p. 281, no. 351, n. 6.

roses, and his own on beef (Εὐφράνωρ τὸν Θησέα τὸν ἑαυτοῦ τῷ Παρρασίου παρέβαλε, λέγων τὸν μὲν ἐκείνου ῥόδα βεβρωκέναι, τὸν δ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ κρέα βόεια).[38] Pliny confirms this and also informs us that Euphranor wrote *uolumina* on his art (*Uolumina quoque composuit de symmetria et coloribus. Opera eius sunt equestre proelium, XII dei, Theseus in quod dixit eundem apud Parrhasium rosa pastum esse, suum uero carne*).[39]

The comparison between these two sources suggests that Euphranor expressed this judgment in his books on symmetry and colours.[40] In fact, both Pliny and Plutarch attribute the comparison between the two paintings to Euphranor (*dixit*, παρέβαλε, λέγων) and Pliny refers to the information after mentioning Euphranor's books.[41] The exact meaning of Euphranor's judgement is still an issue of debate, but it is clear that the artist expressed sharp criticism of Parrhasius' style in depicting figures regarding the use of proportions and/or colour for giving volume to figures: underlying the issue was a different interpretation of the human male figure.[42] An interesting aspect is that, far from being just an anecdote, this controversy has probably found an echo in Euphranor's treatises and originated from a different conception of art and use of artistic techniques.

This polemic was still famous in the Imperial Age together with the paintings in question. In fact, both Pliny and Plutarch refer to Euphranor's judgement, while Parrhasius' *Theseus* was no longer in its original (probably Athenian) display, but had been moved to Rome, where it was probably destroyed. Euphranor's *Theseus*, instead, remained one of the most appreciated paintings in the *Athenian Agora*, since Pliny considers it worth mentioning to represent Euphranor's art, while Plutarch celebrates it within a session dedicated to the best Athenian painting, and Pausanias saw and described it.

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[38] Plutarch, *De gloria Atheniensium* 346 a–b.

[39] Plinius, *nat.* 35.139. Euphranor's *uolumina* are also mentioned by Vitruvius (7, praef. 14), see Palagia 1980, p. 11–12.

[40] Pfuhl 1923, p. 750.

[41] For a more in-depth analysis of the texts and their comparison, see Falaschi 2015, p. 258–68.

[42] On this issue see Ferri 1946, p. 128; Palagia 1980, p. 9 and 59–60; Koch 2013, p. 96; Falaschi 2015, p. 260–65, with further bibliography.

4. *Zeuxis uersus Agatharchus. The Art of Slowness*

In ancient art criticism slowness and attention to detail was an important point, a proof of the quality of an artwork. Often sources stress that a masterpiece took a lot of dedication and time to create, as in the case of the *Ialysus* by Protogenes.[43]

Zeuxis in particular was famous among the ancients for his attention to detail. His most famous painting was the *Helen* dedicated in the Temple of Hera at Capo Licinio.[44] According to the sources, Zeuxis could not find a woman beautiful enough to pose as Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, so he selected the finest features of different models to create a composite image of ideal beauty. In his account of the episode, Pliny stresses Zeuxis' *diligentia*, which is implicit in the anecdote itself and in the choice of different women for depicting Helen (*tantus diligentia*).[45] Lucian also confirms Zeuxis' fame: he describes the painter's disappointment when the Athenians admired his Hippo-centaurs for the innovation in the subject rather than for the accuracy of details (τὴν ἀκρίβειαν / τῶν δὲ αὖ φώτων εἰ καλῶς ἔχει καὶ κατὰ τὴν τέχνην).[46] Moreover, the contest with Parrhasius in imitating nature shows Zeuxis' constant search for realism (*ita ueritate repraesentata*).[47]

Therefore, we can understand why he also had the reputation for being slow, since his conception of art took a lot of time to create. Obviously, his idea of a detailed and slow-to-create artwork was not shared by all artists, at his time as well as in the ensuing

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[43] Plinius, *nat.* 35.80 *opus inmensi laboris ac curae supra modum anxiae*; Plutarch, *Demetrius* 22.5 ἑπτὰ γὰρ ἔτεσι λέγεται συντελέσαι τὴν γραφὴν ὁ Πρωτογένης; Fronto, *Ad M. Caesarem et inuicem* 2.3.4 τὸν Πρωτογένη τὸν ζωγράφον φασὶν ἔνδεκα ἔτεσιν ἢ τὸν Ἰάλυσον γράψαι, μηδὲν ἕτερον ἐν τοῖς ἔνδεκα ἔτεσιν ἢ τὸν Ἰάλυσον γράφοντα; Ps.-Plutarch, *De exerc.* 178.17–23 (ed. Gildemeister & Bücheler 1872, p. 525–26).

[44] De Angelis 2005.

[45] Plinius, *nat.* 35.64 *reprehenditur tamen ceu grandior in capitibus articulisque, alioqui tantus diligentia, ut Agragantinis facturus tabulam, quam in templo Iunonis Laciniae publice dicarent, inspexerit uirgines eorum nudas et quinque elegerit, ut quod in quaque laudatissimum esset pictura redderet.*

[46] Lucian, *Zeuxis* 7.

[47] Plinius, *nat.* 35.65. On this contest, see above.

centuries. In this respect Plutarch refers to a story about his rivalry with the painter Agatharchus:[48]

> καίτοι ποτέ φασιν Ἀγαθάρχου τοῦ ζωγράφου μέγα φρονοῦντος ἐπὶ τῷ ταχὺ καὶ ῥαδίως τὰ ζῷα ποιεῖν ἀκούσαντα τὸν Ζεῦξιν εἰπεῖν· 'ἐγὼ δ' ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ'.

> And yet they say that once on a time when Agatharchus the painter was boasting loudly of the speed and ease with which he made his figures, Zeuxis heard him, and said, 'Mine take, and last, a long time'.

Plutarch intends to celebrate the restoration of the Athenian Acropolis in Pericles' times and stresses the greatness of this deed by pointing out the contradiction that it overcame: it is even more worth admiring because it was made in a short time, contrary to every artistic rule that establishes that a great artwork needs a long time to create. As a symbol of this conception of art, Plutarch cites Zeuxis and his *querelle* with Agatharchus.[49]

He refers to this episode again in *De amicorum multitudine*, but this time he describes Zeuxis as protesting against some critics:[50]

> Ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ Ζεῦξις αἰτιωμένων αὐτόν τινων ὅτι ζωγραφεῖ βραδέως, 'ὁμολογῶ', εἶπεν, 'ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ γράφειν, καὶ γὰρ εἰς πολύν', οὕτω φιλίαν δεῖ καὶ συνήθειαν σῴζειν παραλαβόντας ἐν πολλῷ κριθεῖσαν.

> Just as Zeuxis, when some persons charged him with painting slowly, retorted by saying, 'Yes, it takes me a long time, for it is to last long', so it is necessary to preserve friendship and intimacy by adopting them only after spending a long time in passing judgement upon them.

In this context, Plutarch uses Zeuxis' story in a completely different way—that is, to stress that friendship should be accepted only after a long period, because, like great artworks, it takes time

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[48] Plutarch, *Pericles* 13.3: ed. Stadter 1989; trans. Perrin 1916.

[49] On the painter Agatharchus see, with further bibliography, Falaschi 2015, p. 116–72.

[50] Plutarch, *De amicorum multitudine* 94f: ed. Klaerr, Philippon & Sirinelli 1989; trans. Babbitt 1928.

to build. The differences between the two accounts, in particular the change in Zeuxis' opponents, lead to various evaluations. It is possible that Plutarch used, as in other cases, the same *hypomnema* and adapted the story to the context of quotation; [51] otherwise his memory may have failed, or two different versions may have circulated at his time. [52]

Given the existence of this double version of the events as well as of similar accounts for other painters and poets, [53] it is difficult to establish the reliability of the story about the polemic between Zeuxis and Agatharchus. In fact, although they were probably contemporaries [54] and despite the presence, at the core of the episode, of a technical discussion on two different conceptions of painting, the story has a strong anecdotic aura. Moreover, if what is known about Zeuxis confirms his fame as a slow painter, the scant information about Agatharchus makes it difficult to evaluate his presence in this story, although some attempts have been made to relate his rapidity to his activity as a set designer for the theatre [55] and to his innovations in wall painting. [56] Therefore, this controversy could also be a later invention, developed starting from a well-known image of Zeuxis' art and based on some artistic principles which were very important in ancient times.

However, we can state without doubt that the polemic between Zeuxis and Agatharchus circulated in the Imperial Age and characterized the image of these artists in that period. At that time, it was chosen to embody an aspect of art which was important in ancient art theory—that is, the slowness and duration of an artwork. Moreover, Plutarch's use of this polemic shows well how, beyond the technical and artistic issue, it went on to assume

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[51] On Plutarch's use of *hypomnemata* and the theory of 'clusters of parallel passages', see Pelling 1979, p. 94–95; Van der Stockt 1999a; 1999b; van Meirvenne 1999; 2001; Van der Stockt 2002; van Meirvenne 2002; Van der Stockt 2004a; 2004b; 2005; Beck 2010; Verdegem 2010, p. 141–49, 272–78, 404–05.

[52] For a more in-depth analysis of the texts and their comparison, see Falaschi 2015, p. 165–68.

[53] Ps.-Plutarch, *De liberis educandis* 6f–7a (on Apelles); Valerius Maximus 3.7, ext. 3 (on Euripides). See Falaschi 2015, p. 168–72.

[54] Falaschi 2015, p. 162–65, with previous bibliography.

[55] Vitruvius 7, praef. 11. For this interpretation, see, e.g., Lepik-Kopaczyńska 1961, p. 385–86; Gschwantler 1975, p. 126; Rouveret 1989, p. 114.

[56] Moreno 1979, p. 656.

another function and became a positive ethical example, so that even the name of Zeuxis' rival was no longer important. In particular, in Plutarch's perspective this controversy became a canon in judging artworks, as in the case of the Athenian Acropolis, but it also exceeded the boundaries of art to become an ethical model for life: this is the case of the comparison with friendship.

5. *Nichomachus Admiring Zeuxis.*
Two Opposite Ideas of Art

We can add another chapter to Zeuxis' controversy regarding slowness. In fact, a fragment from Plutarch's *On Love*, transmitted by Stobaeus, refers to this episode: [57]

> ὥσπερ εἰπεῖν ποτε Νικόμαχον λέγουσι πρὸς ἄνθρωπον ἰδιώτην φήσαντα μὴ καλὴν αὐτῷ φανῆναι τὴν Ζεύξιδος Ἑλένην·'λάβε γάρ' ἔφη 'τοὺς ἐμοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, καὶ θεός σοι φανήσεται'.

> For example, there is a story that when some man with no professional knowledge of art told Nicomachus that he had not thought Zeuxis' Helen beautiful, the painter replied: 'Take my eyes, and you will think her a goddess'.

By mentioning this episode, Plutarch intends to reject Menander's theory according to which love does not arise from eyesight because otherwise everyone would love the same woman. According to the philosopher, Menander is making a mistake because he does not consider that senses like eyesight or hearing are developed at different levels in human beings. In fact, the expert of a *techne* can judge better than others the products of his art, as in the case of Nicomachus' appreciation of Zeuxis' *Helen*.

The same story is referred to by Aelian, who compares it with λόγοι, to state that whoever listens to them should train his ears, in the same way that painters train their eyes (ἐγὼ δ' ἂν φαίην τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων, ἀλλ᾽ εἴ τις ἔχοι πεπαιδευμένα ὦτα, ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ χειρουργοὶ τεχνικὰ ὄμματα).[58] This comparison between eyesight and hearing, and between experts of the two sectors, brings to

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[57] Plutarch, *On Love* fr. 134 Sandbach (= Stobaeus 63.34). Trans. Sandbach 1969.

[58] Aelianus, *Varia Historia* 14.47.

mind Plutarch's discussion on Menander. It is not easy to define the relationship between the two texts, partly because they are both abridged and/or indirectly transmitted.[59] In any case, they seem to depend on the same tradition, where Nicomachus' story was inserted in a comparison between eyesight and hearing and became the proof of the view that only an expert of a *techne* can judge properly the products of that art.

Nicomachus was active in the fourth century BC,[60] some generations later than Zeuxis, who lived between the mid-fifth century BC and the beginning of the fourth century BC. In antiquity, he was considered a great artist and some of his works were also brought to Rome and displayed in the *Templum Pacis*. In particular, he was famous for his speed in painting (*nec fuit alius in ea arte uelocior*): according to Pliny, he was commissioned to paint a monument for the tyrant Aristratus of Sikyon and he turned up just a few days before the deadline. The tyrant was furious at his delay; nonetheless, he was able to finish the work on time and with magnificent results (*et celeritate et arte mira*).[61]

For this reason, it is possible that his presence in the story on Zeuxis' *Helen* was no coincidence. In fact, the episode seems to assume a deeper meaning if we take into consideration the features of Nicomachus' art and, in particular, his fame of being quick at painting. In this perspective, the episode could represent the homage of a painter famous for his speed to a master of the past who made of slowness and attention to detail the seal of his art. In other words, although in his artworks Nicomachus effectively denied Zeuxis' artistic theory, in this episode he recognizes the greatness of Zeuxis and his *Helen*, which was the painter's most celebrated work. In the perspective of rivalry, this could be considered a case in which an opposition in the conception of art can be overcome, leaving room for the admiration of the rival.

Also in this case, it is impossible to establish the historicity of the event beyond its fame in the Imperial Age. Nonetheless, we might wonder whether at the core of the episode there was

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[59] On this issue, see Falaschi 2015, p. 199–201.

[60] On Nicomachus and his activity, see E. Falaschi in Adornato & Falaschi (forthcoming a), with further bibliography.

[61] Plinius, *nat.* 35.109.

a discussion on slowness and speed in creating artworks, developed during the fourth century BC and connected to the figure of Nicomachus. Apparently, this discussion existed in the Imperial Age and brought fame to these episodes involving Zeuxis, Agatharchus and Nicomachus.

6. *Rivalry among Greek Artists. Some Conclusions*

The case studies here proposed are just a small selection of a wider range of similar episodes. They intend to offer some reflections on the relationships—controversies as well as networks—which existed among ancient Greek artists, and on their reception in the Imperial Age. Rather than covering the entire topic, this selection aims at suggesting some research directions and new approaches in the study of polemics, rivalry and network in ancient art. At the same time, it offers in-depth analyses on some case studies, each of them representative of different aspects of rivalry (network and friendship; polemics and antagonism; admiration for the rival) or of phenomena connected to it (rivalry in art treatises; the use of polemics in ancient art history; the later invention of controversies and anecdotes).

As in other fields, such as poetry and philosophy, relations between ancient artists could have different forms, from genuine admiration to sharp criticism. In this perspective, the situation also seems to be similar to what happens among modern artists.

Rivalry and polemics originated in artists' workshops and sometimes were probably accepted also in their art treatises, where artists could judge their own works also in comparison with those of other painters and sculptors. In this sense, Apelles' and Euphranor's treatises on painting seem to offer good examples. Moreover, as Pliny shows, in art criticism controversies and friendships also became a means to define networks among artists and workshops, and to construct a history of art.

Being connected not just to artworks but rather to people (the artists), controversies also marked important moments in artists' lives and careers and were narrated as part of their biographies. This probably also favoured the creation of anecdotes, which became famous in the Imperial Age and determined the popular image of artists. Although it is impossible to establish how reliable

these accounts are (and probably in many cases they are not), they nonetheless generally result as being consistent with the artistic activities of that painter or sculptor. Therefore, if they were created later, these creations arose from knowledge about the artists themselves.

The wide reception of these disputes in the cultural system of the Imperial Age also determined their elaboration in a completely different direction, not connected with the artistic environment. In fact, polemics overcame the boundaries of the artistic debate and became ethical examples, commonly used in philosophical, historical and rhetorical writings. In this perspective, they contributed to creating the image of Greek artists that was current in the Imperial Age and to planting the principles of their art in the collective knowledge.

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Abstract

Rivalry played an important role in the development of ancient Greek art and art criticism. Polemics, rivalry, competitions and friendship represented for artists an important moment in defying their own identity and the principles of their art, in establishing their own style and founding their 'schools', in choosing or finding out the best techniques, in expressing their own conception of art, and in determining the aims of art, the political and ethical function of artwork and the social role of artists. Moreover, these disputes became famous biographical episodes in the lives and careers of ancient Greek artists.

In this contribution, I focus on the presence of artistic disputes in technical treatises written by Greek artists. I also investigate their reception in ancient art criticism and, more in general, in literature from the Imperial Age. In this respect, I consider their anecdotic nature and evolution as ethical examples. The cases of the friendship between Apelles and Protogenes, the rivalry between Euphranor and Parrhasius, the controversy between Zeuxis and Agatharchus, and Nichomachus's appreciation of Zeuxis art offer the opportunity to address these issues.

THORSTEN FÖGEN

RIVAL OR ALLY? COMPETITION, CONTROVERSY AND POLEMICS IN ANCIENT TECHNICAL DISCOURSE
CASE STUDIES ON ETHNICITY AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

'Kein Genre ist der Polemik verschlossen, die wir genauso im Epos und im Drama wie in der Lyrik finden; die Fachliteratur ist voll davon.'[1]

1. *Introduction*

Technical, scientific or specialist communication is usually associated with features such as dispassionate detachment and an unprejudiced attitude, furthermore with precision, rigorousness, consistency and ideally objectivity—in other words, it is seen as far removed from emotionality. This view has often been supported by the findings of modern linguistics and communication studies which have repeatedly dissociated technical discourse and its language from *belles lettres* on the grounds of pragmatic differences: technical communication transmits elements of knowledge and is concerned with factual information, it does not pursue an aesthetic or even artistic goal. An example of such an approach can be found in Walter Schönau's study on Sigmund Freud's prose, who makes the following distinction between artistic prose (*Kunstprosa*) and scientific prose (*Wissenschaftsprosa*):

> [...] die Kunstprosa versucht, eine eigene—dichterische—Welt darzustellen und wendet sich dabei an Verstand und Gefühl des Lesers, an den ganzen Menschen. Die Wissenschaftsprosa konstituiert nicht eine Welt für sich, sondern teilt Erkenntnisse mit, sie ist rational und appelliert an die Ratio. Diese ist zweckgebunden und gehorcht den Gesetzen der eindeutigen Information, jene ist zweckfrei und steht nur unter dem Gesetz der Kunst. Die Sprache der Wissenschaft kann und darf zwar auch das Schönheitsgefühl des Lesers

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[1] von Möllendorff 2011, p. 57.

ansprechen, aber nur soweit dies nicht auf Kosten der Ratio geschieht. Ihr apollinisches Ideal der Klarheit und Eindeutigkeit verbietet ihr den Zutritt zu den Erlebnisbereichen des Rausches, der Vision, der Entrücktheit, der Emotionen. Die pragmatische Intentionalität (Information, Überzeugung) unterscheidet die Wissenschaftsprosa von der Sprache der Dichtung. Deren Intentionen sind weniger eindeutig und oft aus verschiedenen ästhetischen und außerästhetischen Bestrebungen gemischt, sie besitzen eine große Variationsbreite und zeigen alle möglichen Intensitätsgrade.[2]

With reference to Karl Bühler's *organon* model, this could be reformulated as follows: technical texts are primarily concerned with content, not with form or style, or with an appeal to their recipients.[3] Their fact-oriented character can be gathered from the lack of affective elements. Furthermore, the author of a technical work recedes almost entirely into the background and is thus invisible as an individual person; in certain scientific and scholarly cultures, this has even led to what has been called an '*Ich-Tabu*' or de-agentivisation.[4] On the whole, it is only rarely conceded by modern scholarship that emotional elements may also play a role in technical communication.[5]

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[2] Schönau 1968, p. 20–21.

[3] See also Wilss 1977, p. 150: 'Die literarische Sprache ist im Gegensatz zur Fachsprache ein ‚Sprachspiel‘, das sich den funktionalen Zwängen pragmatischer Kommunikation entzieht. Sie lebt von der Einzigartigkeit des künstlerischen Ausdrucks und erreicht damit eine semantische und stilistische Spannweite, die die kollektiv geprägten, hochgradig petrifizierten Aussageformen fachsprachlicher Kommunikation weit hinter sich läßt. Ihr sprachliches Konstitutionsprinzip ist nicht die subjektentbundene Aneinanderreihung von eindeutig referentiell markierten sprachlichen Zeichen unter dem Gesichtspunkt eines optimalen kommunikativen Input/Output-Verhältnisses, sondern die semantische, metaphorische und stilistische Innovation. Literarische Sprache zwingt den Empfänger, aus seinen Denk- und Formulierungsstereotypen herauszutreten [...].' Further Huxley 1963 and Belke 1973, p. 31–32.

[4] See e.g. Savory 1967, p. 133–36, 164; further Jahr 2000, p. 2: 'Anonymität wird als eine fachsprachliche Eigenschaft aufgefaßt. Es gilt als wünschens- und anstrebenswert, daß der Verfasser eines Sachtextes als Persönlichkeit unsichtbar wird.' On the phenomenon of de-agentivisation or '*Ich-Tabu*', see also Fögen 2009, p. 16–17.

[5] See e.g. Sager, Dungworth & McDonald 1980, p. 18: 'The use of language to express and create emotions is related to the referential nature of language and exploits the connotations of lexemes. [...] In special subject languages this use is minimised and ideally eliminated, so it need not concern us here. [...] The social

While it is hard to deny that technical or scientific discourse can often be described in those terms, such features are admittedly not universally applicable to any type of technical communication, in particular since it comprises a rather diverse spectrum of categories. This is especially the case for technical discourse in Graeco-Roman antiquity:[6] There is a broad gamut of text types, ranging from short, straightforward and stylistically unaspiring texts, usually of an introductory character, to extensive, intricate and elaborate monographs, handbooks or even encyclopaedias, primarily aimed at a specialist audience. Science and scholarship can also be dealt with in the form of dialogues, sometimes embedded in the context of the symposium, or in the framework of letters, or even through didactic poetry. Even within one and the same discipline, it is possible to observe a remarkable variation of the literary forms in which the material is discussed. For instance, the corpus of Roman land-surveyors (*agrimensores*) not only consists of works written by different authors from different periods, but also brings together rather diverse text types such as commentaries, letters, legal texts and even mere lists or catalogues, all of which are characterised by specific linguistic and stylistic features.[7] Moreover, depending on their readership and motivated by a certain desire for variety, the same authors may produce different types of works; good examples in this regard are highly versatile writers such as Xenophon and Pliny the Elder.[8] Yet even within the very same work, content, structure, language

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use of language, like the emotive use, is minimised and ideally eliminated in highly specialised communication between near equals in knowledge and professional role. But, as with emotive use of language it is difficult, in spoken language particularly, to eliminate all socialising features. Special languages are used by socially diversified groups, and employ the resources of general language which are marked by social use. [...].' A notable exception is Jahr's study on *Emotionen und Emotionsstrukturen in Sachtexten*, in particular her fifth chapter (Jahr 2000, p. 61–104), which provides an overview of the lexical, syntactic and textual strategies for the 'emotionalisation' of technical discourse.

[6] Especially in recent years, there has been a growing body of scholarship on ancient technical writing. See e.g. Meißner 1999; Fögen 2005; Asper 2007; and Fögen 2009, each with detailed references to further publications.

[7] See e.g. Campbell 2000 and Fögen 2014, with further literature.

[8] On Xenophon, see the succinct overview in Fögen 2016a, p. 275–76. On Pliny the Elder's works, conveniently listed by his nephew Pliny the Younger in *Ep*. 3.5.3–6, see Fögen 2009, p. 262–63.

and style may not be uniform throughout. For instance, Pliny's *Naturalis historia* is a rather heterogeneous text that offers a mixture of highly technical passages, anecdotes and elements of historiography. There are also treatises that combine prose with didactic poetry, as for example Columella's *De re rustica*, Marcellus Empiricus' *De medicamentis* and Palladius' *Opus agriculturae*. Hence, it is important to remember that the boundaries separating a practical-instructive text (defined primarily on the basis of subject matter) from a literary-aesthetic text (classified primarily on the basis of form) were much more fluid in the ancient world than they are today. Nevertheless, the common denominator of all these different types of technical literature is the transmission of knowledge and their essentially didactic nature.

In addition, it is possible to demonstrate that ancient science and scholarship often have a pronounced competitive character. Greek and Roman technical texts were not written in a vacuum or neutral climate; their authors often belonged to intellectual networks or even schools whose ideas, value systems and doctrines they were eager to promote. This also implies that they may pursue an explicit or implicit social, political or ethical agenda that can be related to the historical circumstances of their time. Many ancient technical writers use certain strategies to create a particularly favourable image of themselves and to disparage authorities, past and present, working in the same or neighbouring disciplines. Polemics, either direct or indirect, thus plays a crucial role in this sphere of learning.[9] For the sake of self-advertisement, the employment of emotional elements and affect-laden terms is apt to suggest dissatisfaction or even anger and indignation; it also contributes to the construction of in-groups (i.e. people who subscribe to the same standards and values as the technical writers critiquing others) and out-groups (i.e. people who do not fulfil these criteria). Certain scholars may gain a reputation or even notoriety for being overly passionate, uncompromising and polemical. An infamous prototype from Graeco-Roman antiquity is the Cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (fifth/fourth century BC), about whom Diogenes Laertius writes that 'he was great at pouring scorn

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[9] On the self-presentation of ancient technical writers, especially from the early Empire, see Fögen 2009, with ample references to further studies.

on his contemporaries' (6.24: Δεινός τ' ἦν κατασοβαρεύσασθαι τῶν ἄλλων), a habit which is then illustrated by a few telling examples (6.24; trans. Hicks 1925):

> καὶ τὴν μὲν Εὐκλείδου σχολὴν ἔλεγε χολήν, τὴν δὲ Πλάτωνος διατριβὴν κατατριβήν, τοὺς δὲ Διονυσιακοὺς ἀγῶνας μεγάλα θαύματα μωροῖς ἔλεγε καὶ τοὺς δημαγωγοὺς ὄχλου διακόνους. ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ ὡς ὅτε μὲν ἴδοι κυβερνήτας ἐν τῷ βίῳ καὶ ἰατροὺς καὶ φιλοσόφους, συνετώτατον εἶναι τῶν ζῴων νομίζειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ὅτε δὲ πάλιν ὀνειροκρίτας καὶ μάντεις καὶ τοὺς προσέχοντας τούτοις ἢ τοὺς ἐπὶ δόξῃ καὶ πλούτῳ πεφυσημένους, οὐδὲν ματαιότερον νομίζειν ἀνθρώπου.

> The school of Euclides he called bilious, and Plato's lectures waste of time, the performances at the Dionysia great peep-shows for fools, and the demagogues the mob's lacqueys. He used also to say that when he saw physicians, philosophers and pilots at their work, he deemed man the most intelligent of all animals; but when again he saw interpreters of dreams and diviners and those who attended to them, or those who were puffed up with conceit of wealth, he thought no animal more silly.

According to the biographical tradition which has a tendency to intertwine truth and legend, Diogenes took great pains to play the *enfant terrible* and to annoy or even shock people wherever possible; with his eccentricities that earned him the nickname 'dog', he was determined to provoke a scandal and to promote his doctrine of a simple lifestyle.[10] Consequently, 'barking' at others was his second nature.[11] Apart from Diogenes of Sinope,[12] one may also think of Galen of Pergamum (*c.* AD 129–199) and his mordant rants and assaults, although it is somewhat ironic that the very same author was of the opinion that the nature of his soul was

[10] In his biography of the Stoic philosopher Zeno of Citium (7.3), Diogenes Laertius speaks of 'Cynic shamelessness' (Κυνικὴ ἀναισχυντία).

[11] The key text on Diogenes of Sinope is Diogenes Laertius' biography (6.20–81). Further examples of his peculiar or even aggressive character can be found in 6.27–28, 6.38–39, 6.40, 6.53–54 (Diogenes as Σωκράτης μαινόμενος) and 6.74 (Εὐστοχώτατος δ' ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἀπαντήσεσι τῶν λόγων).

[12] In his collection of philosophers' lives, Diogenes Laertius also mentions the Academic sceptic Carneades as a case of polemical behaviour in scholarly matters (4.63): δεινῶς τ' ἦν ἐπιπληκτικὸς καὶ ἐν ταῖς ζητήσεσι δύσμαχος.

such that all his actions were performed without enmity (ἔχθρα), competitiveness (φιλονεικία) or irrational love (φιλία ἄλογος) towards any sect (*De ordine librorum suorum* 2 [XIX 53 Kühn]); it is equally ironic that he gave exhaustive advice on how to exercise restraint in the dealings with others.[13]

From a socio-cultural as well as literary perspective, it is fruitful to investigate the phenomenon of polemics in ancient technical discourse from several different angles:

(1) What exactly defines the polemics of a certain technical author?
(2) How does it manifest itself in terms of content and style?
(3) Against whom is it directed and for what reason? Is the object of criticism a particular individual or a whole group of people?
(4) Is it always aimed at the same target group?

Given the gigantic textual evidence and the limited scope of this paper, I shall focus on two different areas: first on polemics based upon ethnicity (Romans vs. Greeks) and second on attacks motivated by religious affiliation (pagans vs. Christians). My exploration will therefore be restricted to verbal onslaughts against larger groups of people rather than individuals. I will exclusively discuss selected works in which the author, as the *je scientifique* ('scientific I'), is clearly perceptible as an individual who reflects on his methodology and who stylises himself as a scholarly expert and sometimes even as a moral authority.

2. *Polemics Based upon Ethnicity: Romans vs. Greeks*

In particular in areas such as science and scholarship the Romans were deeply influenced by Greek culture and learning. The *locus classicus* is a passage in Horace's *Epistles* where he points out that 'conquered Greece conquered the savage victor and brought the arts into rustic Latium' (*Ep.* 2.1.156–157: *Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit et artis | intulit agresti Latio*). According to this state-

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[13] See esp. Galen, *Ad Thras.* 46 (V 895–96 Kühn), *De propr. an.* 3 (V 12 Kühn) and *De propr. an.* 4 (V 16–17 Kühn). On the role of polemics in Galen's work, see e.g. Lloyd 2008; Asper 2007, p. 323–67, esp. p. 327–28, 336–43, 351–56; Mattern 2008, esp. p. 69–97; Brockmann 2009; Boudon-Millot 2012, esp. p. 275–77; and Petit 2018, passim, esp. p. 90–111.

ment, the Romans lacked cultural refinement before they became the rulers over the Mediterranean world, and it was thanks to the Greeks that the arts were introduced to Rome.[14] A comparable, if slightly different, approach is taken in Book 6 of Vergil's *Aeneid* where Anchises reminds his son Aeneas that it is the task of the Romans to govern mankind with their power, while they do not really need to stand out in areas such as the art of sculpture, rhetoric and astronomy—disciplines in which they may yield the first place to others (*Aen*. 6.847–53).[15]

Yet, although the Romans undoubtedly had a general admiration for Greek learning and sometimes even felt a certain inferiority, their attitude towards the Greeks was not without reservations. It is possible to observe a gradual emancipation of the Romans from the Greeks and their desire to establish a substantial body of scholarship in Latin that could compete with the Greek models. Such an aspiration can be witnessed particularly clearly in the philosophical works of Cicero (see esp. *De finibus* [*fin.*] 1.6–8). But what also shines through the writings of Cicero and other Roman authors is the view that the Romans, despite lagging behind in certain fields, were morally superior. A key passage is the beginning of Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* [*Tusc.*] where this pre-eminence is said to be rooted in the adherence to traditional virtues, having a positive impact on family, household,

[14] See Isaac 2004, p. 394: 'This is the clearest expression anywhere of Roman ambivalence with regard to a subject people with a superior cultural tradition, for no Roman could have read with equanimity that a subject nation took Rome captive.'

[15] See Norden 1957, p. 334: 'In diesen Versen fand der Gegensatz der beiden, jeder in ihrer Eigenart großen und vereint dem Ziel einer Weltkultur zustrebenden Nationen monumentalen Ausdruck [...].' See also Page 1967, p. 499: 'In no passage has the spirit of Roman ambition found nobler expression than in the splendid arrogance of these famous lines [...].' With regard to the unspecific term 'others' (*Aen*. 6.847: *alii*), Williams (1964, p. 61) rightly remarks: 'The Greeks are not named, so obvious is it that they are the people whose intellectual and artistic achievements are described in the first four lines [...].' In his commentary, Williams (1972, p. 513) states: 'When one thinks of the Roman achievement in portraiture in stone, and in oratory (the most practical of the branches of literature, in which Cicero might well be pitted against Demosthenes), it seems that Anchises does less than justice in these matters to his own people—doubtless so that the impact of what the Romans do claim may be all the greater.' For further details, see Hine 1987 and Fögen 2017, p. 102–4, with references to secondary literature.

public affairs and warfare. He also claims that excellent characteristics such as seriousness (*grauitas*), steadfastness (*constantia*), loftiness of spirit (*magnitudo animi*), integrity (*probitas*) and trustworthiness (*fides*) are given to the Romans *by nature*, not through learning.[16] The fact that he writes philosophy in Latin is not only to be understood as a service to the Roman people, in particular as a valuable contribution to the education of younger Romans (see e.g. *Tusc.* 1.5, *fin.* 1.10 and *De off.* 1.1), but also has a highly symbolic value because it creates a self-contained corpus of philosophical works composed in Latin and thus illustrates that the Latin language is perfectly suitable as a medium of specialised communication (see esp. *fin.* 1.10 and 3.5, *De nat. deor.* 1.8). This in turn enables Cicero to portray himself as a pioneer in this area who realised that not having to rely upon treatises written in a foreign language was proof of a high intellectual level and of cultural independence (see *De nat. deor.* 1.7).

As Cicero argues in many of his philosophical works, Latin is not only sufficiently developed for the requirements of a complex technical discourse; there are also instances where the vocabulary of the Latin language surpasses its Greek counterparts because it aptly mirrors the superior moral disposition of the Romans. An example that Cicero uses twice in his oeuvre—first in the dialogue *Cato maior* (44 BC) and then, less than a year later, in one of his *Ad familiares* letters—is the word *conuiuium* ('feast' or 'banquet', literally 'co-living') which, unlike the Greek terms συμπόσιον ('co-drinking') or σύνδειπνον ('co-dining'), puts the emphasis on time spent together with others, not on the mere consumption of food and drink. Passing time in honest and friendly company rather than enjoying simple physical pleasure is regarded as relevant to

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[16] See esp. Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.1–5, esp. 1.1–2: [...] *meum semper iudicium fuit omnia nostros aut inuenisse per se sapientius quam Graecos aut accepta ab illis fecisse meliora, quae quidem digna statuissent, in quibus elaborarent. Nam mores et instituta uitae resque domesticas ac familiaris nos profecto et melius tuemur et lautius, rem uero publicam nostri maiores certe melioribus temperauerunt et institutis et legibus. quid loquar de re militari? in qua cum uirtute nostri multum ualuerunt, tum plus etiam disciplina. iam illa, quae* **natura, non litteris** *adsecuti sunt, neque cum Graecia neque ulla cum gente sunt conferenda. quae enim tanta* grauitas, *quae tanta* constantia, magnitudo animi, probitas, fides, *quae tam excellens in omni genere uirtus in ullis fuit, ut sit cum excellens in omni genere uirtus in ullis fuit, ut sit cum maioribus nostris comparanda?* On Cicero, see Fögen 2000, esp. p. 77–117; for a distilled version, see Fögen 2016b, p. 960–62 and Fögen 2017, p. 104–6.

achieving happiness in life. The Latin word *conuiuium* is explicitly praised as the 'better' or 'wiser' lexical creation, going back to the Romans' ancestors (*maiores*) as the symbols of a modest and undemanding lifestyle characteristic of early Rome.[17]

It is particularly appropriate that Cicero uses Cato the Elder— 'diesen knorrigen Alten', as Büchner has referred to him[18]—as a mouthpiece in the eponymous dialogue to present this concept of a word reflecting its users' ethical spirit. Cato was perhaps the figure who best represented a rather pronounced opposition to the Greeks, in particular to Greek medicine and philosophy, as can be seen from passages in Plutarch's biography of Cato and in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia*.[19] Plutarch reports that Cato had a general aversion to Greek philosophy because he was afraid

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[17] Cicero, *Cato maior* 45: *Neque enim ipsorum conuiuiorum delectationem uoluptatibus corporis magis quam coetu amicorum et sermonibus metiebar; bene enim maiores accubitionem epularem amicorum, quia uitae coniunctionem haberet, 'conuiuium' nominauerunt,* **melius quam Graeci,** *qui hoc idem tum 'compotationem', tum 'concenationem' uocant, ut, quod in eo genere minimum est, id maxime probare uideantur.* Further Cicero, *Ad fam.* 9.24.3 (sent to Papirius Paetus in 43 BC): *Et mehercule, mi Paete, extra iocum moneo te, quod pertinere ad beate uiuendum arbitror, ut cum uiris bonis, iucundis, amantibus tui uiuas. nihil est aptius uitae, nihil ad beate uiuendum accommodatius. nec id ad uoluptatem refero, sed ad communitatem uitae atque uictus remissionemque animorum, quae maxime sermone efficitur familiari, qui est in conuiuiis dulcissimus, ut* **sapientius nostri quam Graeci***; illi* συμπόσια *aut* σύνδειπνα*, id est compotationes aut concenationes, nos 'conuiuia', quod tum maxime simul uiuitur*. In this passage, happiness in life is accentuated twice through the phrase *ad beate uiuendum*, corresponding to the Greek term εὐδαιμονία as the human τέλος, so the idea presented here does indeed have a serious philosophical dimension.—Powell (1988, p. 194) notes: 'Apart from these two passages, neither *compotatio* nor *concenatio* occurs elsewhere in classical Latin: it seems that they were both coined by Cicero as calques of the Greek words [...].'

[18] Büchner 1964, p. 402.

[19] However, as Wulfram (2009, p. 31–32) correctly states with regard to Cicero's Cato as the central character of *De senectute*, 'Cato bekennt sich entgegen seinem sonst überlieferten "demonstrativen Anti-Hellenismus" ausdrücklich zum Griechischstudium, ja zeigt sich in der griechischen Literatur belesen und bedenkt (von wenigen Ausnahmen abgesehen) viele Taten und Worte von Griechen mit Lob.' On Cato and the Greeks more generally, see Astin 1978, p. 157–81, 341–42, who comes to the following nuanced conclusion: 'Cato patently did not react to "Hellenism" as to a package, to be accepted or rejected in its entirety, nor yet was his "selective" reaction balanced, considered, and coherent. A wide acquaintance with matters Greek extended in some directions to an easy familiarity, in others to a hostile prejudice. In respect of Greek culture it is more meaningful to speak of Cato's attitudes rather than his attitude' (Astin 1978, p. 180–81).

that it might have too much of an influence on young men and make them prefer a reputation based upon mere words over one achieved by military deeds.[20] He is said to have mocked all Greek culture out of patriotic zeal;[21] his adverse stance is then exemplified as follows (*Cato maior* 23.1–2; trans. Perrin 1914, slightly modified):

> ὅς γε καὶ Σωκράτη φησὶ λάλον καὶ βίαιον γενόμενον ἐπιχειρεῖν, ᾧ τρόπῳ δυνατὸς ἦν, τυραννεῖν τῆς πατρίδος, καταλύοντα τὰ ἔθη καὶ πρὸς ἐναντίας τοῖς νόμοις δόξας ἕλκοντα καὶ μεθιστάντα τοὺς πολίτας. τὴν δ᾽ Ἰσοκράτους διατριβὴν ἐπισκώπτων γηρᾶν φησι παρ᾽ αὐτῷ τοὺς μαθητὰς ὡς ἐν Ἅιδου παρὰ Μίνῳ χρησομένους ταῖς τέχναις καὶ δίκας ἐροῦντας. τὸν δὲ παῖδα διαβάλλων πρὸς τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ φωνῇ κέχρηται θρασυτέρᾳ τοῦ γήρως, οἷον ἀποθεσπίζων καὶ προμαντεύων, ὡς ἀπολοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι τὰ πράγματα γραμμάτων Ἑλληνικῶν ἀναπλησθέντες.

> He says, for instance, that Socrates was a mighty prattler, who attempted, as best he could, to be his country's tyrant, by abolishing its customs, and by enticing his fellow citizens into opinions contrary to the laws. He made fun of the school of Isocrates, declaring that his pupils kept on studying with him till they were old men, as if they were to practise their arts and plead their cases before Minos in Hades. And seeking to prejudice his son against Greek culture, he indulges in an utterance all too rash for his years, declaring, in the tone of a prophet or a seer, that Rome would lose its empire when it had become infected with Greek letters.

Using a tripartite structure (the two negative examples of the philosopher Socrates and the rhetorician Isocrates, followed by Cato's warnings aimed at his son), Plutarch builds an effective climax culminating in a horror scenario: Rome's potential loss of political power under the influence of Greek culture. Hence, Plutarch explains Cato's hostility as politically motivated, but

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[20] Plutarch, *Cato maior* 22.4: ὁ δὲ Κάτων ἐξ ἀρχῆς τε τοῦ ζήλου τῶν λόγων παραρρέοντος εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἤχθετο φοβούμενος, μὴ τὸ φιλότιμον ἐνταῦθα τρέψαντες οἱ νέοι τὴν ἐπὶ τῷ λέγειν δόξαν ἀγαπήσωσι μᾶλλον τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων καὶ τῶν στρατειῶν [...].

[21] Plutarch, *Cato maior* 23.1: [...] ὅλως φιλοσοφίᾳ προσκεκρουκὼς καὶ πᾶσαν Ἑλληνικὴν μοῦσαν καὶ παιδείαν ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας προπηλακίζων. The word προπηλακίζειν is very strong: it means 'bespatter with mud', 'trample in the mire' or 'treat with contumely'.

he also hastens to add that Cato's 'words of ill omen' (δυσφημία) proved to be unfounded and that the Romans adopted Greek learning and culture for their purposes.[22] Through his choice of words, Plutarch suggests that Cato was unnecessarily polemical (cf. ἐπισκώπτων and διαβάλλων), that he was irrational, especially considering his age (cf. φωνῇ κέχρηται θρασυτέρᾳ τοῦ γήρως), and perhaps also that, by comporting himself like an oracle (cf. the rather grand combination of the two participles οἷον ἀποθεσπίζων καὶ προμαντεύων), he was artificially pompous and theatrical. Plutarch therefore counters Cato's attack on the Greeks with his very own polemics and presents him as an anachronism even among the Romans.

A similar picture emerges in the next chapter in which Plutarch thematises Cato's suspicion (ὑποψία) of Greek medicine, in particular of Greek doctors practising in Rome. The starting-point here is Cato's scepticism with which he approached Hippocrates' remark to the Great King of Persia that he would never make his services available to the enemies of the Greeks. Plutarch presents Cato's distrust which, as in the case of philosophy and rhetoric, he tried to inculcate in his son as unfounded or even unreasonable,[23] and he subtly questions how Cato himself practised medicine and pharmacology (*Cato maior* 23.5; trans. Perrin 1914):

> αὐτῷ δὲ γεγραμμένον ὑπόμνημα εἶναι, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο θεραπεύειν καὶ διαιτᾶν τοὺς νοσοῦντας οἴκοι, νῆστιν μὲν οὐδέποτε διατηρῶν οὐδένα, τρέφων δὲ λαχάνοις ἢ σαρκιδίοις νήσσης ἢ φάσσης ἢ λαγῷ· καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο κοῦφον εἶναι καὶ πρόσφορον ἀσθενοῦσι, πλὴν ὅτι πολλὰ συμβαίνει τοῖς φαγοῦσιν ἐνυπνιάζεσθαι· τοιαύτῃ δὲ θεραπείᾳ καὶ διαίτῃ χρώμενος ὑγιαίνειν μὲν αὐτός, ὑγιαίνοντας δὲ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ διαφυλάττειν.

> He himself, he said, had written a book of recipes, which he followed in the treatment and regimen of any who were sick

[22] Plutarch, *Cato maior* 23.3: ἀλλὰ ταύτην μὲν αὐτοῦ τὴν δυσφημίαν ὁ χρόνος ἀποδείκνυσι κενήν, ἐν ᾧ τοῖς τε πράγμασιν ἡ πόλις ἤρθη μεγίστη καὶ πρὸς Ἑλληνικὰ μαθήματα καὶ παιδείαν ἅπασαν ἔσχεν οἰκείως.

[23] Plutarch, *Cato maior* 23.3–4: ὁ δ' οὐ μόνον <u>ἀπηχθάνετο</u> τοῖς φιλοσοφοῦσιν Ἑλλήνων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἰατρεύοντας ἐν Ῥώμῃ <u>δι' ὑποψίας εἶχε</u>, καὶ τὸν Ἱπποκράτους λόγον, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀκηκοώς, ὃν εἶπε τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως καλοῦντος αὐτὸν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς τισι ταλάντοις, οὐκ ἄν ποτε βαρβάροις Ἑλλήνων πολεμίοις ἑαυτὸν παρασχεῖν, ἔλεγε κοινὸν ὅρκον εἶναι τοῦτον ἰατρῶν ἁπάντων, καὶ <u>παρεκελεύετο φυλάττεσθαι</u> τῷ παιδὶ πάντας.

in his family. He never required his patients to fast, but fed them on greens, or bits of duck, pigeon, or hare. Such a diet, he said, was light and good for sick people, except that it often causes dreams. By following such treatment and regimen he said he had good health himself, and kept his family in good health.

It is important to note that Plutarch formulates this entire paragraph in reported speech so as to distance himself from Cato's old-fashioned *Hausvätermedizin*. How ineffective it ultimately was becomes even more obvious from Plutarch's concluding comment that Cato lost both his wife and his son and that this double bereavement should be interpreted as something for which Cato deserved censure or even revenge, although he himself enjoyed good health until old age.[24] What sounds like a rather dry and not particularly favourable summary reinforces the antiquated and apparently not very successful character of his traditional methods. It also throws a bad light on Cato's recipe book (ὑπόμνημα) mentioned here.[25] Presumably it was precisely Cato's aggressive disapproval of the Greeks that motivated Plutarch to counter polemics with polemics. Although Plutarch took a serious interest in Roman culture and was friends with prominent Romans,[26] his

[24] Plutarch, *Cato maior* 24.1: Καὶ περί γε τοῦτο φαίνεται γεγονὼς οὐκ ἀνεμέσητος· καὶ γὰρ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἀπέβαλεν. αὐτὸς δὲ τῷ σώματι πρὸς εὐεξίαν καὶ ῥώμην ἀσφαλῶς πεπηγὼς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀντεῖχεν, ὥστε καὶ γυναικὶ πρεσβύτης ὢν σφόδρα πλησιάζειν καὶ γῆμαι γάμον οὐ καθ' ἡλικίαν ἐκ τοιαύτης προφάσεως. See also Wulfram 2009, p. 71 n. 94: 'Den frühen Tod, der Catos erste Frau und den gemeinsamen Sohn ereilte, deutet Plutarch als Strafe für die durch "Hybris" geprägte Verachtung der griechischen Medizin [...].'

[25] On the character of Cato's *Hausvätermedizin*, see Nutton 2004, p. 162: 'What sort of medicine Cato would have used is made clearer in his treatise *On Agriculture*, a manual that covers all aspects of farm management from ploughing to the health of slaves and animals. It consists largely of herbal remedies, sometimes accompanied by chants and charms, and even ritualistic performances [...]. In strong contrast to Hippocratic medicine, with its references to the sacredness of the art and the need for the patient to consult a proper physician, these remedies are accessible to all. [...] In its content, this medicine is typical of folk medicine in many societies [...].' See also Mudry 1990, p. 135: 'Il s'agit d'une médecine primitive et populaire, ce qui ne signifie pas forcément inefficace, exclusivement empirique si l'on entend par là un certain nombre de recettes fondées sur une expérience brute qui ne s'inscrit dans aucun effort de construction d'un système étiologique et pathologique rationnel [...].' Further Scarborough 1993, p. 15–19 and Boscherini 1993, esp. p. 730–40.

[26] See e.g. Jones 1971 and Stadter 2014.

perspective is essentially a Greek one, and it is probably not surprising that he found Cato's assessment of central areas of Greek culture and knowledge provocative.

A rather different picture is offered by Pliny the Elder, who in his *Naturalis historia* portrays Cato the Elder as a weighty authority in disciplines such as medicine and pharmacology. Book 29 of his encyclopaedia begins with an overview of the history of medicine. Pliny underscores that there is no other discipline which is as volatile as medicine.[27] While he deems the writings of Hippocrates as an advancement of the discipline, he also notes that there have been doctors who are mainly seeking financial profit and who have distorted medicine into some kind of show (*ostentatio*). Instead of focusing on the patient, they are much more interested in unscrupulous self-stylisation and money-making.[28] Furthermore, Pliny criticises that they often prescribe unnecessarily complicated and extravagant, but ultimately inefficient remedies.[29] Such an excess is not in line with his own promotion of the principle of simplicity: the ingredients of drugs should be strictly based upon what nature has to offer—also in order to keep expenses at a minimum.[30] Med-

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[27] Pliny the Elder, *nat.* 29.2: *nullam artium inconstantiorem fuisse aut etiamnunc saepius mutari*. Similarly *nat.* 29.11: *mutatur ars cottidie totiens interpolis, et ingeniorum Graeciae flatu inpellimur, palamque est, ut quisque inter istos loquendo polleat, imperatorem ilico uitae nostrae necisque fieri, ceu uero non milia gentium sine medicis degant nec tamen sine medicina, sicuti populus Romanus ultra sexcentesimum annum, neque ipse in accipiendis artibus lentus, medicinae uero etiam auidus, donec expertam damnauit.*

[28] Pliny the Elder, *nat.* 29.3–5, 29.7–9, 29.11, 29.16, 29.17 and 29.20–22. See also *nat.* 26.11–20 on the 'rhetorisation' of medicine, exemplified through Asclepiades, an orator turned medical practitioner.

[29] Pliny the Elder, *nat.* 29.24–25: *theriace uocatur **excogitata compositio luxuriae**. finxit rebus sexcentis, cum tot remedia dederit natura, quae singula sufficerent. Mithridatium antidotum ex rebus LIIII componitur, inter nullas pondere aequali, et quarundam rerum sexagesima denarii unius imperatur, quo deorum, per Fidem, ista monstrante! hominum enim **subtilitas tanta** esse non potuit; **ostentatio artis et portentosa scientiae uenditatio** manifesta est.* On the contradiction between *ostentatio* and *natura*, see Hahn 1991, p. 232: '[...] auch ein solches Gebaren entbehrt jeder Begründung in der Natur, die doch sonst selbst die Aufgabe übernimmt, auf die dem Menschen nützlichen Heilmittel aufmerksam zu machen. Unter demselben Gesichtspunkt finden auch *garrulitas* und *eloquentia* keinen Platz in der wahren Medizin [...].'

[30] Pliny the Elder, *nat.* 24.4–5: *haec sola naturae placuerat esse remedia, parata uulgo, inuentu facilia ac sine inpendio e quibus uiuimus. postea fraudes hominum et ingeniorum capturae officinas inuenere istas, in quibus sua cuique homini uenalis promittitur uita. statim compositiones et mixturae inexplicabiles decantantur, Ara-*

icine practised in the opposite way is branded here as an essentially Greek science, by whose adoption the Romans subjected themselves to Greek doctors. To corroborate his position, he invokes earlier Roman authorities such as Cassius Hemina and Cato the Elder who were strongly opposed to Greek medicine. Pliny quotes extensively how Cato advised his son Marcus to avoid Greek doctors (*nat.* 29.14; trans. Jones 1963):

> *Dicam de istis Graecis suo loco, M. fili, quid Athenis exquisitum habeam et quod bonum sit illorum litteras inspicere, non perdiscere. uincam nequissimum et indocile genus illorum, et hoc puta uatem dixisse: quandoque ista gens suas litteras dabit, omnia conrumpet, tum etiam magis, si medicos suos hoc mittet. iurarunt inter se barbaros necare omnes medicina, sed hoc ipsum mercede faciunt, ut fides iis sit et facile disperdant. nos quoque dictitant barbaros et spurcius nos quam alios Ὀπικῶν appellatione foedant. interdixi tibi de medicis.*

> I shall speak about those Greek fellows in their proper place, son Marcus, and point out the result of my enquiries at Athens, and convince you what benefit comes from dipping into their literature, and not making a close study of it. They are a quite worthless people, and an intractable one, and you must consider my words prophetic. When that race gives us its literature, it will corrupt all things, and even all the more if it sends hither its physicians. They have conspired together to murder all foreigners with their physic, but this very thing they do for a fee, to gain credit and to destroy us easily. They are also always dubbing us foreigners, and to fling more filth on us than on others, they give us the foul nickname of Opici. I have forbidden you to have dealings with physicians.

There are several obvious parallels to the previously quoted passage from Plutarch's biography (*Cato maior* 23.1–4): the reference to the damaging impact of Greek culture on the Roman world, the conspiracy of Greek doctors against foreigners, and Cato as a

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bia atque India uel Media aestimantur, ulcerique paruo medicina a Rubro mari inputatur, cum remedia uera cotidie pauperrimus quisque cenet. nam si ex horto petantur aut herba uel frutex quaeratur, nulla artium uilior fiat. ita est profecto, magnitudine populus R. perdidit ritus, uincendoque uicti sumus. paremus externis, et una artium imperatoribus quoque imperauerunt.

prophet, warning his son.[31] However, this is not reported speech as in Plutarch, but a direct quotation which is supposed to add considerable weight to Pliny's argument and which puts Cato straight before the reader's eyes. Cato's antipathy towards the Greeks more generally and towards Greek medicine more specifically is expressed through a sweeping condemnation of their character. How much Pliny the Elder is prepared to align himself with Cato is signalled by his reference to Cato's old age which enabled him to gather wide-ranging experiences and by his explicit clarification that Cato was not against medicine *per se*, but against its abuse and manipulation for purposes other than the welfare of the patient. This verdict is introduced by two rhetorical questions, answered right away by a forceful exclamation (*nat*. 29.15; trans. Jones 1963, slightly modified):

> *quid ergo? damnatam ab eo rem utilissimam credimus? minime, Hercules.*

> What then? Are we to believe that he condemned a very useful thing? Not at all, by Hercules!

This is a very emotional outcry in defence of Cato, as can be seen from the interjected appeal to Hercules, which is frequently employed by Pliny in his *Naturalis historia* to add emphasis.[32] Like

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[31] Pliny's sentence *quandoque ista gens suas litteras dabit, omnia conrumpet* is similar to Plutarch's ὡς ἀπολοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι τὰ πράγματα γραμμάτων Ἑλληνικῶν ἀναπλησθέντες (23.2). His οἷον ἀποθεσπίζων καὶ προμαντεύων (23.2) corresponds to *et hoc puta uatem dixisse*. Plutarch's ἔλεγε κοινὸν ὅρκον εἶναι τοῦτον ἰατρῶν ἁπάντων, καὶ παρεκελεύετο φυλάττεσθαι τῷ παιδὶ πάντας (23.4) combines *iurarunt inter se barbaros necare omnes medicina* and *interdixi tibi de medicis*, although the two passages differ on the content of the actual oath: while Plutarch's Cato said that all Greek physicians had taken the same oath as Hippocrates, namely not to help any enemies of the Greeks, Pliny's Cato insinuates that they want to kill all foreigners; this may lead to the same result, but Pliny's *necare* is certainly much more glaring than Plutarch's οὐκ ἄν ποτε βαρβάροις Ἑλλήνων πολεμίοις ἑαυτὸν παρασχεῖν (23.4).

[32] Together with this passage, Pliny the Elder uses *Hercule(s)* 37 times: *nat*. 2.6, 2.206, 7.2, 7.5, 7.108, 7.120, 7.169, 10.32, 12.59, 13.25, 14.3, 14.149, 17.27, 17.107, 18.37, 19.52, 19.56, 21.49, 23.2, 23.34, 25.2, 28.4, 28.5, 28.58, 29.17, 29.142, 31.88, 32.143, 33.39, 33.116, 33.143, 35.163, 35.168, 36.46, 36.109 and 37.6. By contrast, Columella in *De re rustica* uses it no more than three times (*De re rust*. 1 praef. 17, 8.2.14 and 11.1.24), and Vitruvius in *De architectura* does not use it at all.

Plutarch, Pliny also refers to Cato's recipe book (*commentarius*)[33] used for the treatment of his entire household, but quite in contrast to Plutarch, Pliny further cites Cato as having prolonged both his life and that of his wife to an advanced age by the medical treatments outlined in that work.[34] He is in full support of Cato's unpretentious *Hausvätermedizin* and uses his pharmacological work as a guideline for his own descriptions of remedies, their preparation and their effect. Like Cato, he propagates a decidedly Roman version of medicine which stands out due to its simple, modest and unostentatious character and is therefore far removed from the *ambitiosa ars* of the Greeks (*nat.* 29.20). By adopting the Catonian model, he stylises himself as an altruistic and caring *pater familias*, and by embracing this role, he brings to his readers' minds that they are his *familia* on whom he unstintingly and selflessly bestows his knowledge. This does not imply that Pliny the Elder is always in complete agreement with Cato, as can be inferred from other passages in the *Naturalis historia*. But altogether, he utilises him as a paradigm that embodies traditional Roman values and challenges customs and practices associated with the Greeks, in particular in the area of medicine and pharmacology.[35]

Even with regard to terminological matters, Pliny the Elder occasionally takes issue with certain Greek expressions that he finds inappropriate because they downplay the perilous nature of

[33] On the term *commentarius*, see Fögen 2009, p. 121, 126, 133, 273, with further references.

[34] It needs to be borne in mind that Cato the Elder (234–149 BC) was married twice: first to Licinia, who passed away around 155 BC (i.e. about six years before Cato), and then to Salonia. His first son Marcus Porcius Cato Licinianus died in 152 BC. The son to whom Plutarch is referring in *Cato maior* 24.1 must therefore be Marcus Porcius Cato Licinianus because his second son, Marcus Porcius Cato Salonianus, was not born until 154 BC and survived his father (Plutarch, *Cato maior* 27.5). A convenient summary can be gleaned from Aulus Gellius who devotes an entire chapter to Cato the Elder and his family members (*Noct. Att.* 13.20).

[35] For a more detailed examination of Cato's role in Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, see Fögen 2009, esp. p. 235, 241–45, 254–57. See in particular Fögen 2009, p. 264: 'Er [sc. Pliny the Elder] stilisiert sich [...], wenn man so will, als einen "modernen", die Vergangenheit sinnvoll einbeziehenden und zugleich nach vorne schauenden Cato.'

what they designate.[36] For instance, a type of the deadly nightshade or belladonna (τρύχνος), the juice of which can cause madness, has been called δορύκνιον ('spear-plant') or ἐρυθρόν ('red plant') by some Greeks, thereby detracting from its serious danger.[37] However, such cases are by no means limited to Greek words, but may also occur in Latin;[38] this is important to remember because it proves that Pliny the Elder evaluates case by case and that he is by no means restricting his criticism to the Greeks.[39] What he advocates with these examples is the need for serious scholarship that combines professional competence with ethical awareness; full responsibility is required at all levels, including the coining of terms. He therefore uses this kind of polemics to advertise his authority and reliability as a scholar to his readers.

An increasing emancipation from the Greeks can also be identified in Roman rhetoric of the late Republic. The first Latin school of orators was founded by Lucius Plotius Gallus, presumably in the early first century BC.[40] He was the author of a work on the use of gestures, as Quintilian attests (*Inst. orat.* 11.3.143). Since Greek was the medium of rhetorical instruction up until the

[36] On terminological issues in Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, see Fögen 2010, with further references.

[37] Pliny the Elder, *nat.* 21.178–79: *tertio folia sunt ocimi, minime diligenter demonstrando remedia, non uenena, tractantibus, quippe insaniam facit paruo quoque suco.* **quamquam et Graeci auctores in iocum uertere.** *drachmae enim pondere lusum furoris gigni dixerunt, species uanas imaginesque conspicuas obuersari demonstrantes; duplicatum hunc modum legitimam insaniam facere; quidquid uero adiciatur ponderi, repraesentari mortem. hoc est uenenum, quod innocentissimi auctores simpliciter dorycnion appellauere ab eo, quod cuspides in proeliis tinguerentur illo passim nascente. qui parcius insectabantur, manicon nominauere; qui nequiter occultabant, erythron aut neurada aut, ut nonnulli, perisson, ne cauendi quidem causa curiosius dicendum.*

[38] Pliny the Elder, *nat.* 26.2: *grauissimum ex iis lichenas appellauere Graeco nomine, Latine, quoniam a mento fere oriebatur,* **ioculari primum lasciuia**, **ut est procax multorum natura in alienis miseriis**, *mox et usurpato uocabulo mentagram* [...].

[39] For a more detailed analysis of Pliny the Elder's attitude towards the Greeks and Greek scholarship, see Fögen 2009, esp. p. 231–34, 258–62.

[40] Suetonius, *De gramm.* 26.1: *L. Plotius Gallus. de hoc Cicero in epistula ad M. Titinium sic refert: 'Equidem memoria teneo pueris nobis primum Latine docere coepisse Plotium quendam. ad quem cum fieret concursus quod studiosissimus quisque apud eum exerceretur, dolebam mihi idem non licere.* [...].' Further Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* 2.4.41–42; see also Cicero, *De orat.* 3.93–94 and Seneca the Elder, *Contr.* 2 praef. 5.

first century BC,[41] the establishment of a Latin school of oratory was an innovation. Both Cicero's early treatise *De inuentione* and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which offer a comprehensive overview of the discipline, testify that the Latin language was used for theoretical instruction in rhetoric from the eighties BC onwards.[42] But as can be seen from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* [*Rhet. Her.*], writers on oratory were beginning to distance themselves from the Greeks. The anonymous author of this work does this right at the beginning by underlining that he differs from Greek manuals in that he has limited himself to the essentials in order to avoid the impression that, by including irrelevant material, he would want to make his discipline look more complex than necessary (*Rhet. Her.* 1.1; trans. Caplan 1954):

> *Non enim in se parum fructus habet copia dicendi et commoditas orationis, si recta intelligentia et definita animi moderatione gubernetur. Quas ob res illa, quae Graeci scriptores **inanis arrogantiae causa** sibi assumpsere, reliquimus. Nam illi, ne parum multa scisse uiderentur, ea conquisiuerunt, quae nihil attinebant, ut ars difficilior cognitu putaretur; nos autem ea, quae uidebantur ad rationem dicendi pertinere, sumpsimus.*

> For it is true that copiousness and facility in expression bear abundant fruit, if controlled by proper knowledge and a strict discipline of the mind. That is why I have omitted to treat those topics which, **for the sake of futile self-assertion**, Greek writers have adopted. For they, from fear of appearing to know too little, have gone in quest of notions irrelevant to the art, in order that the art might seem more difficult to understand. I, on the other hand, have treated those topics which seemed pertinent to the theory of public speaking.

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[41] Cicero, *Part. orat.* 1–2 (Cicero's son Marcus speaking): *Studeo, mi pater, Latine ex te audire ea quae mihi tu de ratione dicendi Graece tradidisti* [...]. *Visne igitur, ut tu me Graece soles ordine interrogare, sic ego te uicissim eisdem de rebus Latine interrogem?* See also Crassus in *De orat.* 3.95: *Quamquam non haec ita statuo atque decerno, ut desperem Latine ea, de quibus disputauimus, tradi ac perpoliri posse; patitur enim et lingua nostra et natura rerum ueterem illam excellentemque prudentiam Graecorum ad nostrum usum moremque transferri, sed hominibus opus est eruditis, qui adhuc in hoc quidem genere nostri nulli fuerunt; sin quando exstiterint, etiam Graecis erunt anteponendi.*

[42] On the dates of *De inuentione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, see e.g. Nüßlein 1998, p. 363–66, esp. p. 365 n. 7, who provides references to further literature; but see Stroh 2009, p. 359–61.

The author's remarks on the methodology of *memoria* at the end of Book 3 (*Rhet. Her.* 3.38–40) and on the selection of *exempla* at the beginning of Book 4 (*Rhet. Her.* 4.1–10, esp. 4.1 and 4.4–7)[43] are also targeted against Greek theory. In all three passages it is hard to ignore the polemical tone with which certain principles of Greek rhetoric are criticised.[44]

To sum up, Latin literature developed out of a continuous emulation with Greek predecessors; this applies to *belles lettres* as well as technical writing. Being confronted with a culturally advanced and sophisticated model often leads to a feeling of inferiority, but also to a desire to reach at least a similar or ideally higher level of refinement. This in turn may result in a deliberate and sometimes vigorously proclaimed dissociation from such paragons. Reactions of this kind become particularly common in cases where communities have gained considerable political power over a larger territory. The longing for cultural independence may coincide with a propensity towards a socio-political and ethical demarcation from groups that are perceived as intellectually superior. The Romans compensated for their alleged deficits by claiming moral pre-eminence for themselves. It is thus unsurprising that stereotypes about the Greeks pervade Latin literature and also found their way into Latin technical writing.

In particular the figure of Cato the Elder had a long-lasting impact on scholarly discourse. He embodies the stern Roman who endorses a plain and morally upright lifestyle, intimately connected with the idea of Rome as a traditionally agricultural society, and who saw the intrusion of Greek learning as a threat to that simplicity. As a man who believed in the power of cabbage as a universal remedy, his opposition to Greek medicine and its ambition to supply patients with highly complex and expen-

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[43] See Kennedy 1972, p. 130–34.

[44] See also Riesenweber 2019, p. 399: 'Kein griechischer Schriftsteller wird namentlich zitiert, obwohl die Vorschriften im Kern aus griechischen Rhetorikhandbüchern stammen dürften; wenn Cicero auf eine Szene der Tragödie *Antiope* des Euripides verweist (Cic. *inv.* 1,94 = TrGF V₁ F 183iia), verweist der Anonymus (ausführlicher) auf die Entsprechung in der Übersetzung des Pacuvius (*Rhet. Her.* 2,43 = TRF³ p. 86). In den Blick genommen wird allein der technische Aspekt der Rhetorik, der noch dazu stark an den Erfordernissen der Praxis ausgerichtet wird—was verwunderlich ist bei einem Schriftsteller, der sich nach eigener Aussage in seiner Freizeit mit Philosophie beschäftigt.'

sive drugs can be grasped as a fight against *luxuria*,[45] perceived as detrimental for the Romans also by later authors, including Pliny the Elder. Cato's repudiation of philosophy and rhetoric, which trained people to think for themselves and formulate their ideas in a logical and convincing fashion, may to some extent be interpreted as a fear of a 'democratisation' and the elite's loss of control. Since a great deal was at stake in times of change, it is easy to comprehend what motivated his harsh polemics in the context of technical discourse. By contrast, Pliny the Elder lived in a less turbulent period, but nevertheless adhered to traditional values and rehearsed the catalogue of prejudices that the Romans had against the Greeks. However, even in the works of a Graecophile such as Cicero, it does not take long to detect certain anti-Greek sentiments which he inserted wherever they suited his argument.[46]

Ultimately, disagreement with Greek science and scholarship, frequently leading to violent outbursts of anger, is often a pose, albeit to a different degree, which serves not only to satisfy more conservatively minded audiences, but also to celebrate Roman accomplishments. Many Roman technical authors were steeped in Greek learning, but they also had to take into account that not every Roman had the same kind of intellectual background. This necessitated certain compromises as to how Greek antecedents were dealt with in Latin technical discourse. This certainly does not mean that polemics in such a context is meaningless. It does have a significance, as it recalls the *mos maiorum*, fosters Roman values and professes an approach that differs from Greek scholarship, also to fulfil the specific needs of Roman society. Controversies against the Greeks nurture and strengthen group identity, they bolster the idea of the sovereign status of Roman erudition. Consequently, anti-Hellenic rivalry and polemics, however staged and artificial they may be after all, have a high symbolic value in Roman technical discourse.

[45] On Cato's perceptions of *luxuria* more generally, see Astin 1978, p. 91–103 and Wulfram 2009, p. 73–75.

[46] See Fögen 2000, p. 77–117 and Isaac 2004, p. 389–94, each with additional literature.

3. *Polemics Motivated by Religious Affiliation: Christians vs. Pagans*

In the ancient world, competition, controversy and polemics in scientific and technical discourse can also be driven by religious factors. This is particularly noticeable in late antiquity—a period in which Christian writers constantly problematise the relationship between pagan and Christian learning.[47]

One of the key texts is Saint Jerome's twenty-second letter, written to Julia Eustochium, the daughter of his pupil Paula, in AD 384 in order to provide guidelines for a chaste and virtuous life pleasing to god.[48] As her spiritual adviser, Jerome also urges her to avoid an excessive exhibition of rhetorical talent, as it would not befit a Christian woman (*Ep.* 22.29; trans. Wright 1933):

> *Nec tibi diserta multum uelis uideri aut lyricis festiua carminibus metro ludere. Non delumbem matronarum saliuam delicata secteris, quae nunc strictis dentibus, nunc labiis dissolutis, balbutientem linguam in dimidiata uerba moderantur, rusticum putantes omne, quod nascitur. Adeo illis adulterium etiam linguae placet. [...] Quid facit cum psalterio Horatius?*

[47] See especially Ellspermann 1949; Krause 1958; Hagendahl 1958; Hagendahl 1983; and Gemeinhardt 2007. On the problems connected with the use of the term 'pagan', see e.g. Fredouille 1986, esp. p. 1121–1122; Clark 2004, p. 35; Kahlos 2007, p. 17–26; Salzman 2008, p. 187–89; Cameron 2011, p. 14–32; Maxwell 2012, p. 852–53, 866–67; Lee 2016, p. 8–9; and Gassman 2020, esp. p. 5–6, 78–83. However, as Salzman (2008, p. 189) points out, the term 'Christian' is also somewhat difficult: 'Similarly problematic is the notion that there was one kind of Christian or one kind of Christianity [...]. The numerous varieties of Christians in the Roman Empire, just as the numerous varieties of "pagans", as well as those who fell between the two or shared in both cultic worlds, or in Judaism (that is, God-fearers; pagan Christians), should make scholars aware of the limits of assuming a deep divide in Roman society along clear-cut fault lines and speaking only in terms of the "conflict between pagans and Christians".' See also Kahlos 2007, p. 15–17.

[48] On Jerome's *Ep.* 22, see the commentaries by Adkin 2003 and Duval & Laurence 2011, further e.g. Adkin 1988; Feichtinger 1991; Laurence 1997, passim; Feichtinger 1997; and Stenger 2021. See also Kelly 1975, p. 41–43, 99–103; Cameron 1991, p. 171–80; Conring 2001, p. 230–47; Rebenich 2002, p. 7–9, 19–20, 33–34; Clark 2004, p. 41–42; Gemeinhardt 2007, p. 431–39; Fürst 2016, p. 147–51; Schlange-Schöningen 2018, p. 15–22; and Breuer 2019, p. 526–29. Specifically on Jerome's recommendations for women's appropriate communicative behaviour, see Fögen 2004, p. 230–32. On female communication in a Christian context more generally, see e.g. Cameron 1991, p. 72–73; further references in Fögen 2004, p. 230 n. 61.

cum euangeliis Maro? cum apostolo Cicero? Nonne scandaliza-
tur frater, si te uiderit in idolio recumbentem? Et licet omnia
munda mundis et nihil reiciendum sit, quod cum gratiarum
actione percipitur, tamen simul bibere non debemus calicem
Christi et calicem daemoniorum.

Do not seek to appear over-eloquent or compose trifling
songs in verse. Do not in false refinement follow the sickly
taste of those married ladies who habitually speak with a lisp
and clip all their words, now pressing their teeth together, and
now opening their lips wide, fancying that anything produced
naturally is countrified. So much do they like adultery even of
the tongue. […] What has Horace to do with the Psalter, Ver-
gil with the Gospels and Cicero with Paul? Is not a brother
made to stumble if he sees you sitting at table in an idol's tem-
ple? Although unto the pure all things are pure and nothing is
to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, still we ought
not to drink the cup of Christ and the cup of devils at the
same time.

In this excerpt, a series of three questions is used to juxtapose
well-known pagan authors with the biblical writings. The stark
contrast, heightened through strict syntactic parallelism, is then
resumed in the final sentence where Christian wisdom and pagan
literature are presented as being mutually exclusive.[49] This diagno-
sis is illustrated by Jerome's account of a critical personal experi-
ence, the famous dream in which he promised god to shun pagan
works in the future. In his narrative, he addresses a problem that
many Christian intellectuals had with the language and style
of the bible. In comparison with pagan works it seemed far less
attractive (*Ep.* 22.30; trans. Wright 1933):

*Si quando in memet reuersus prophetam legere coepissem, **sermo***
***horrebat incultus**, et quia lumen caecis oculis non uidebam,*
non oculorum putabam culpam esse, sed solis.

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[49] See also Jerome, *Ep.* 107.4: *Sic erudienda est anima, quae futura est templum*
domini. Nihil aliud discat audire, nihil loqui, nisi quod ad timorem Dei pertinet.
Turpia uerba non intellegat, cantica mundi ignoret, adhuc tenera lingua psalmis
dulcibus inbuatur. On *Ep.* 107, see Schlange-Schöningen 2018, p. 54: 'Für die
kleine Paula entwirft Hieronymus ein Leben, wie er es in seinem Traum gelobt,
aber niemals selbst zu leben vermocht hat. Es ist eine Pädagogik nicht nur des
Kulturbruchs, sondern auch der Selbstverleugnung.'

> Whenever I returned to my right senses and began to read the prophets, **their language seemed harsh and barbarous**. With my blind eyes I could not see the light: but I attributed the fault not to my eyes but to the sun.

But the way in which he phrases this sentence already indicates that his perception was based upon an error of judgement. His statement anticipates the outcome of his encounter with god in his dream: ultimately, it made him read the divine scriptures (*diuina*) with a greater zeal than he had ever devoted to the works of mortals (*mortalia*). Nonetheless, given Jerome's deep familiarity with the pagan tradition, a complete renunciation of authors such as Vergil or Cicero, as it is envisaged here, belongs to the realm of fiction.[50] It is evident that Jerome included this highly dramatic episode for the sake of Eustochium; he wanted to set an example for her that she ought to follow. Therefore the dream has a clear didactic function and should not necessarily be interpreted as a completely truthful autobiographical story. It should also be noted that the rhetorical elements used by Jerome in this passage create an exceptionally stylised narrative which must have made a lasting impression on Eustochium as well as other readers of this letter.[51] The piece nicely encapsulates the conflict in which ancient Christian writers often found themselves and which led them to integrate mechanisms of polemics into their discourse in order to distance themselves from the pagan tradition, in particular from rhetoric which was frequently associated with cunning or misleading strategies, apt to divert the attention from simple and

[50] See also Rebenich 2002, p. 9: 'It is obvious that Jerome lied—without blushing in embarrassment. Of course he read pagan authors after his vow.' See also Kelly 1975, p. 43–44, with further references.

[51] See Kelly 1975, p. 100–1: 'While cast in the form of a letter, it is in fact a sizeable treatise laying down the motives which should actuate those who devote themselves to a life of virginity, and also the rules by which they ought to regulate their daily conduct. [...] the letter is brilliant in style and packed with subtle persuasion; one reads with a smile his promise to keep it free from all flattery, all rhetorical display [sc. *Ep*. 22.2].' See also Cain 2009, p. 101: 'He wrote this *épître-traité* ostensibly as a guide for Paula's teenage daughter Eustochium [...] on how to preserve her virginity. But Eustochium was only the incidental addressee; *Ep*. 22 was an open letter of instruction to all Christian virgins from aristocratic families.'

straightforward facts. This is done even in cases where Christian authors widely draw upon pagan sources.[52]

Polemics in Christian literature has been the object of numerous studies. As has been pointed out, from its early stages Christianity followed the public culture of debate and conflict that had its origin in the ancient Greek world. In a predominantly religious framework, it absorbed the rhetorical and literary strategies of controversy, dispute and attack from the Graeco-Roman tradition and refined it for its own purposes, namely to polemicise against different groups such as Jews, Gnostics, heretics and pagans. Like their Greek and Latin precursors, written documents of Christian polemics occur in different shapes and forms such as invective, abuse, slander, irony, satire, persiflage and many others.[53] They are employed to demarcate the essential characteristics of the Christian community and strengthen the feeling of group identity among its members.

One revealing example from the sphere of technical writing that will be considered here is Isidore of Seville's work *Etymologiae*, also called *Origines*.[54] Like Cassiodorus in his *Institutiones*,[55] Isidore combines pagan knowledge with Christian elements.

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[52] In addition to the studies listed in n. 47 (above), one may refer to Cameron 1991, who describes the dilemma of early Christian authors as follows (1991, p. 86): 'Many of the Christian writers [...] were themselves converts from the educated class, well trained in classical rhetoric. Thus they had both an advantage and a problem: they needed to use classical rhetoric and indeed could not help but do so, yet they also wished to separate themselves from it.' See also Breuer 2019, p. 514: 'Angesichts der Veränderung der sozialen Zusammensetzung der christlichen Gemeinden und des steigenden Bildungsniveaus im Zuge der Bekehrung der Reichseliten war es von zentraler Bedeutung, im Rahmen der Auseinandersetzung mit der antiken Kultur insgesamt auf der einen Seite eine angemessene Rezeptionshaltung gegenüber der vom Einsatz rhetorischer Mittel geprägten paganen Literatur zu entwickeln; auf der anderen Seite war zu erwägen, inwieweit und in welcher Form sich Christen in ihren eigenen Schriften und gegebenenfalls in ihrer homiletisch-missionarischen Praxis der Eloquenz bedienen sollten.'

[53] See Wischmeyer & Scornaienchi 2011, p. 2–3, 4–5, further Kahlos 2007, p. 66–67 and Studer 1997, p. 366–76. Of particular importance for the analysis of polemics in Christian literature written in Latin is Opelt 1980. The same scholar dedicated a separate study to the role of polemics in Jerome (Opelt 1973).

[54] In what follows I have built on some observations made in Fögen 2018, p. 19–22, a contribution which also contains further references to secondary literature on Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*.

[55] On Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, see Fögen 2016c, with references to previous scholarship.

As Fuhrmann has highlighted, the *Etymologiae* are 'die umfassendste Summe aller Gegebenheiten, welche die untergehende Spätantike der Nachwelt hinterlassen hat.'[56] Already in his introductory book on grammar, which repeatedly incorporates quotations from pagan poets (especially Vergil's *Aeneid*) in order to illustrate specific aspects of language and style, Isidore occasionally attempts to situate certain phenomena in a Christian sphere and explain them through a reference to their Christian background. Thus he writes about the hexameter (*Etym.* 1.39.11):[57]

> *Omnibus quoque metris prior est. Hunc primum Moyses in cantico Deuteronomii longe ante Pherecyden et Homerum cecinisse probatur. Unde apparet antiquiorem fuisse apud Hebraeos studium carminum quam apud gentiles, siquidem et Iob Moysi temporibus adaequatus hexametro uersu, dactylo spondeoque, decurrit.*

> [The heroic] is also the earliest of all meters. Moses is shown to have composed this meter first in his song in Deuteronomy (*Deut.* 32–33) long before Pherecydes and Homer. Whence it appears that the practice of poetry is more ancient among the Hebrews than among the pagans, seeing that Job, a contemporary of Moses, also took up hexameter verse, with its dactyl and spondee.

According to this statement, it is not the pagans who were the pioneers in the use of the hexameter, but, as is fitting with the status of Hebrew as the original language of all people,[58] it is figures

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[56] Fuhrmann 1994, p. 98.

[57] Here and below, the Latin text is taken from Lindsay 1911; translations follow Barney, Lewis, Beach & Berghof 2006.

[58] Isidore, *Etym.* 9.1.1: *Linguarum diuersitas exorta est in aedificatione turris post diluuium. Nam priusquam superbia turris illius in diuersos signorum sonos humanam diuideret societatem, una omnium nationum lingua fuit, quae Hebraea uocatur; quam Patriarchae et Prophetae usi sunt non solum in sermonibus suis, uerum etiam in litteris sacris.* See also *Etym.* 1.3.4, further 12.1.2: *Non autem secundum Latinam linguam atque Graecam aut quarumlibet gentium barbararum nomina illa inposuit Adam, sed illa lingua, quae ante diluuium omnium una fuit, quae Hebraea nuncupatur.* On Isidore's view of Hebrew as 'Ursprache' and on the origin of this concept, see especially Denecker 2017, p. 84–85, 114–16, 247, 363–66. See also Reydellet 1984, p. 30 n. 1, who primarily refers to passages in Augustine.

of the Old Testament.[59] Their ground-breaking role is also postulated for the area of historiography (*Etym.* 1.42):

> *Historiam autem* **apud nos** *primus Moyses de initio mundi conscripsit.* **Apud gentiles** *uero primus Dares Phrygius de Graecis et Troianis historiam edidit, quam in foliis palmarum ab eo conscriptam esse ferunt. Post Daretem autem in Graecia Herodotus historiam primus habitus est. Post quem Pherecydes claruit his temporibus quibus Esdras legem scripsit.*

> **Among us** [Christians] Moses was the first to write a history, on creation. But **among the pagans**, Dares the Phrygian was first to publish a history, on the Greeks and Trojans, which they say he wrote on palm leaves. After Dares, Herodotus is held as the first to write history in Greece. After him Pherecydes was renowned, at the time when Ezra wrote the law.

Through the phrase *apud nos*, Isidore clearly identifies himself with the Christians and distances himself from the pagans.[60] However, this does not mean that pagan historiography or other pagan genres of literature would be useless for a Christian (*Etym.* 1.43).[61]

Nonetheless, there are sections in the *Etymologiae* in which Isidore expresses his dissatisfaction with pagan traditions and insti-

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[59] See Amsler 1989, p. 152–58 and Fontaine 1983, p. 169–72. Similar ideas in Isidore are gathered by Curtius 1973, p. 447–48: 'Hymnen zum Lobe Gottes verfaßte zuerst David, erst "lange nach ihm" Timothoe. Das erste Epithalamion verfaßte Salomo, von ihm übernahmen die Heiden die Gattung. [...] Erfinder des Threnos ist Jeremias, bei den Griechen später Simonides. Die Kithara wurde von Tubal erfunden, nach Meinung der Griechen von Apoll; die Astrologie von Abraham, nach Meinung der Griechen von Atlas. Die Philosophie wird von den Griechen in Physik, Ethik, Logik eingeteilt. Aber schon die hl. Schrift gliedert sich nach diesen Disziplinen: *Genesis* und *Ecclesiastes* z.B. bieten Physik; Ethik findet man in den Sprichwörtern Salomos; Logik [...] im Hohen Lied und in den Evangelien. Die hebräische Sprache ist die Mutter aller übrigen. Wie man sieht, ist hier aus dem "Entsprechungssystem" eine Lehre vom Primat und der Prärogative Israels in Philosophie, Wissenschaft und Dichtung geworden.' See also Borst 1966, p. 30–31.

[60] One may compare Augustine's pupil Orosius who speaks of 'our Moses' (*Hist.* 7.27.1: **nostrum** [...] *Moysen*) to set him apart from the two pagan historiographers Pompeius Trogus and Tacitus. On Moses as a pioneer, see also Tatian, *Orat.* 31.1–2 and 40.1–41.1, further Tertullian, *Apol.* 19; for details, see Droge 1989.

[61] On Isidore's approach to historiography, especially in his *Etymologiae*, see Fontaine 1983, p. 180–85.

tutions. This is particularly noticeable in the cases of tragedy and comedy which he defines through their content: tragedy is said to deal with 'former acts and offences of criminal kings', whereas comedy is supposed to be about 'the deeds of private persons as well as the abuse of virgins and the love affairs of harlots.'[62] Such a one-sided, reductionist approach exhibits the Christian author's aversion to these text types.[63] With these biased classifications, Isidore wants to evoke similar feelings on the part of his readers. Polemics is used to create an in-group of like-minded individuals.

In some instances, Isidore's attacks on pagan ideas and concepts are inspired by long-standing Christian arguments. In his rejection of circus games, he follows Tertullian and his work *De spectaculis* (published probably before AD 200).[64] Genuine Christians should not expose themselves to such demonic workings which can only be viewed as a sign of madness.[65] The danger of circus games that Isidore perceives for the spiritual strength of Christians is emphasised through the highly rhetorical character of this passage—in particular through the series of five ablatives *cum Circensi insania, cum inpudicitia theatri, cum amphitheatri crudelitate, cum atrocitate arenae, cum luxuria ludi*, of which the last four are combined with alternating genitives (pattern: AB, BA, AB, AB).

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[62] Isidore, *Etym.* 18.45–46: *De tragoedis. Tragoedi sunt qui antiqua gesta atque facinora sceleratorum regum luctuosa carmine spectante populo concinebant. De comoedis. Comoedi sunt qui priuatorum hominum acta dictis aut gestu cantabant, atque stupra uirginum et amores meretricum in suis fabulis exprimebant.*

[63] One may compare the much more neutral definitions of tragedy and comedy propounded by the fourth-century grammarian Diomedes, *Gramm. Lat.* 1.488.14–16 Keil: *comoedia a tragoedia differt, quod in tragoedia introducuntur heroes duces reges, in comoedia humiles atque priuatae personae; in illa luctus exilia caedes, in hac amores, uirginum raptus.*

[64] On the date of Tertullian's work *De spectaculis*, see Turcan 1986, p. 37–45. The most detailed analysis of Christian views on spectacles is offered by Lugaresi 2008, who also has a long section on Tertullian (p. 377–427); for a concise overview, see Piepenbrink 2005, p. 294–99. Specifically on Isidore, see Dox 2004, p. 29–42.

[65] Isidore, *Etym.* 18.59: *Haec quippe spectacula crudelitatis et inspectio uanitatum non solum hominum uitiis, sed et daemonum iussis instituta sunt. Proinde nihil esse debet Christiano cum Circensi insania, cum inpudicitia theatri, cum amphitheatri crudelitate, cum atrocitate arenae, cum luxuria ludi. Deum enim negat qui talia praesumit, fidei Christianae praeuaricator effectus, qui id denuo appetit quod in lauacro iam pridem renuntiauit; id est diabolo, pompis et operibus eius.*

Furthermore, it can be observed that Isidore repeatedly tries to correct or rationalise pagan myths. In his view, the Gorgons were three sisters who dazzled viewers with their beauty to such an extent that they believed to have been turned into stones by them. For Isidore, the Sirens were not hybrid creatures consisting of birds and women, but prostitutes (*meretrices*) who exploited travellers.[66] He thus provides rational explanations for established myths and mythical figures and tries to expose their exaggerated and sensationalist character. For him, they are based upon misunderstandings and the dramatisation of facts which, for a more critical observer, had nothing to do with the sphere of the supernatural.[67]

More fundamentally, the long final section of Book 8 is reserved for the demolition of the pagan gods who are uncovered to have once been humans.[68] The reason why they began to be

[66] Isidore, *Etym.* 11.3.29–31: *Gorgones quoque meretrices crinitas serpentibus, quae aspicientes conuertebant in lapides, habentes unum oculum quem inuicem utebantur. Fuerunt autem tres sorores unius pulchritudinis, quasi unius oculi, quae ita spectatores suos stupescere faciebant ut uertere eos putarentur in lapides. Sirenas tres fingunt fuisse ex parte uirgines, ex parte uolucres, habentes alas et ungulas: quarum una uoce, altera tibiis, tertia lyra canebant. Quae inlectos nauigantes sub cantu in naufragium trahebant. Secundum ueritatem autem meretrices fuerunt, quae transeuntes quoniam deducebant ad egestatem, his fictae sunt inferre naufragia. Alas autem habuisse et ungulas, quia amor et uolat et uulnerat. Quae inde in fluctibus conmorasse dicuntur, quia fluctus Venerem creauerunt.* The passage on the Sirens, in particular the rationalisation of these figures, is largely identical with Servius in Verg., *Aen.* 5.864: *Sirenes secundum fabulam tres, parte uirgines fuerunt, parte uolucres, Acheloi fluminis et Calliopes musae filiae. Harum una uoce, altera tibiis, alia lyra canebat: et primo iuxta Pelorum, post in Capreis insulis habitauerunt, quae inlectos suo cantu in naufragia deducebant. Secundum ueritatem meretrices fuerunt, quae transeuntes quoniam deducebant ad egestatem, his fictae sunt inferre naufragia.* [...]. See Wedner 1994, p. 62, 85, 111–12, 119, whose study traces back the tradition and transformation of the myth of the Sirens. See also Courcelle 1975, p. 41–42, who writes: 'C'est surtout à travers lui [i.e. Servius] que cette interprétation allait franchir les siècles et jouir d'une longue fortune dans l'Occident chrétien' (Courcelle 1975, p. 39).

[67] On *mirabilia* and *portenta* and their rationalisation in the *Etymologiae*, see also Diesner 1977, p. 69–70; Ribémont 2001, p. 166–74 and Cardelle de Hartmann 2017, p. 92–93. However, it must be acknowledged that the rationalisation of myths also occurs in pagan authors, writing much earlier than Christian thinkers. For details, see e.g. Fuhrmann 1990, esp. p. 141–45, and Hawes 2014; specifically on pagan approaches to the Sirens, see Wedner 1994, p. 58–112.

[68] For a more thorough scrutiny of *Etym.* 8.11 (including text and commentary), see MacFarlane 1980, who also sheds light on the sources used by Isidore in this chapter.

worshipped after their death was that they had stood out through certain merits and accomplishments during their lifetime.[69] Isidore derides the attempts of the pagans to connect some of the names of their gods to physical causes as being based upon 'empty stories' (*Etym.* 8.11.29: *per uanas fabulas*) and poetic fiction, and he summarises his view through the striking gnomic dictum that 'room for fiction is wide open when truth leaves off' (*Etym.* 8.11.29: *Omnino enim fingendi locus uacat, ubi ueritas cessat*). In his opinion, pagan etymologies of gods' names unveil not only a blatant intellectual deficit motivated by a misunderstanding of the workings of nature, but also a sacrilege from a Christian point of view.[70] His language could hardly be more condemning. Yet at the same time, his criticism is limited to a few passages within this chapter of Book 8; it is not that the *entire* section is pervaded by such scathing remarks.[71]

Isidore's rejection of the pagan tradition is particularly strong in the case of religious beliefs linked to superstition. He dismisses the observation of stars as a method of the prediction of someone's fortune because it contradicts the principles of Christian belief. As he reminds the reader, such a practice was opposed not only by Christian theologians, but also by pagan thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle and others who committed themselves to truth-

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[69] Isidore, *Etym.* 8.11.1–2: *Quos pagani deos asserunt, homines olim fuisse produntur, et pro uniuscuiusque uita uel meritis coli apud suos post mortem coeperunt, ut apud Aegyptum Isis, apud Cretam Iouis, apud Mauros Iuba, apud Latinos Faunus, apud Romanos Quirinus. Eodem quoque modo apud Athenas Minerua, apud Samum Iuno, apud Paphos Venus, apud Lemnos Vulcanus, apud Naxos Liber, apud Delos Apollo* [...]. One may compare e.g. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 20.5–21.12, esp. 20.5: *Similiter errauerunt erga deos quoque maiores nostri: inprouidi, creduli rudi simplicitate crediderunt. Dum reges suos colunt religiose, dum defunctos eos desiderant in imaginibus uidere, dum gestiunt eorum memorias in statuis detinere, sacra facta sunt quae fuerant adsumpta solacia.* For similar passages in other authors, see MacFarlane 1980, p. 11–12 and Kahlos 2007, p. 154–57. See also Schippers 1952; Thraede 1966, esp. p. 883–89; and Fuhrmann 1990.

[70] Isidore, *Etym.* 8.11.89: *Haec et alia sunt gentilium fabulosa figmenta, quae interpretata sic habentur, ut ea non intellecta damnabiliter tamen adorent.* See Mac-Farlane 1980, p. 32: 'This section, clearly Isidore's own editorializing, together with § 29 (cf. *vanas fabulas* there with *fabulosa figmenta*) serves to bracket the discussion of the major and minor pagan gods.'

[71] See also Kuhlmann 2006, p. 154–55 and Cardelle de Hartmann 2017, p. 93 with n. 34.

fulness.[72] Isidore already voiced a similar view in an earlier chapter of Book 3 where he differentiates between the respectable discipline of astronomy and the partly questionable astrology.[73] It is intriguing that he uses the adjective *superstitiosus* to describe pagan customs related to those fields and that he thereby reverses a stereotype that occurs in pagan literature to brand Christian religion. For example, in his *Life of Nero*, Suetonius writes that Christians were 'a group of people who were the followers of a new and wicked superstition' (*Nero* 16.2: *genus hominum superstitionis nouae ac maleficae*). Tacitus notes that the 'pernicious superstition' (*Ann.* 15.44: *exitiabilis superstitio*) of the Christians was repressed for a moment through the death penalty of Christ. In a letter to the emperor Trajan, Pliny the Younger speaks of an 'infection of this superstition' that has been pervading all kinds of areas (*Ep.* 10.96.9: *neque ciuitates tantum, sed uicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio peruagata est*).[74] Isidore thus

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[72] Isidore, *Etym.* 3.71.38–39: *Horum igitur signorum obseruationes, uel geneses, uel cetera **superstitiosa**, quae se ad cognitionem siderum coniungunt, id est ad notitiam fatorum, et fidei nostrae sine dubitatione contraria sunt, sic ignorari debent a Christianis, ut nec scripta esse uideantur. Sed nonnulli siderum pulcritudine et claritate perlecti in lapsus stellarum caecatis mentibus conruerunt, ita ut per subputationes noxias, quae mathesis dicitur, euentus rerum praescire posse conentur: quos non solum Christianae religionis doctores, sed etiam gentilium Plato, Aristoteles, atque alii rerum ueritate conmoti concordi sententia damnauerunt, dicentes confusionem rerum potius de tali persuasione generari.* For a fuller discussion of Christian objections to astrology, see Laistner 1941; Gundel 1950, p. 825–30; Barton 1994, p. 64–85; Piepenbrink 2005, p. 299–305; Hegedus 2007; and Mace 2018, esp. p. 436–44.

[73] Isidore, *Etym.* 3.27: *Inter Astronomiam autem et Astrologiam aliquid differt. Nam Astronomia caeli conuersionem, ortus, obitus motusque siderum continet, uel qua ex causa ita uocentur. Astrologia uero partim naturalis, partim **superstitiosa** est. Naturalis, dum exequitur solis et lunae cursus, uel stellarum certas temporum stationes. **Superstitiosa** uero est illa quam mathematici sequuntur, qui in stellis auguriantur, quique etiam duodecim caeli signa per singula animae uel corporis membra disponunt, siderumque cursu natiuitates hominum et mores praedicare conantur.* See also *Etym.* 4.13.4 on the importance of astronomy for practitioners of medicine. On the role of astronomy and astrology in Isidore, see Fontaine 1953 and Fontaine 1983, p. 453–589, further Fontaine 2000, p. 311–28. According to Fontaine (1953, p. 297–98), Isidore reacted to forms of superstitious astrology which were still common during his time.

[74] On this passage, see Isaac 2004, p. 487: 'This is the usual language of infection and illness.' Similarly De Labriolle 1948, p. 20–24 and Kahlos 2007, p. 107–9. See also Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10.96.8: *Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset ueri, et per tormenta quaerere. Nihil aliud inueni quam **superstitionem prauam et immodicam**.*

appropriates conventional pagan terminology for his own purposes and retrojects it onto the same group from which it originated as a defamation directed against Christians.[75]

In a similar vein, he finds it reprehensible to believe that it would be possible to use the watching of crows to make deductions about the future (*Etym.* 12.7.44):

> *Cornix, annosa auis, apud Latinos Graeco nomine appellatur; quam aiunt augures hominum curas significationibus agere, insidiarum uias monstrare, futura praedicere. Magnum nefas haec credere, ut Deus consilia sua cornicibus mandet. Huius inter multa auspicia tribuunt etiam pluuias portendere uocibus* [...].

> The crow [*cornix*], a long-lived bird, is named by Latin speakers with a Greek word [i.e. κορώνη]. Augurs say that this bird by its signs is attentive to the concerns of humans, and shows the paths where ambush lies, and predicts the future. It is a great sin to believe that God would entrust his counsels to crows. Among many omens, they even ascribe to these birds the predicting of rain by their calls [...].

The series of three infinitives (*hominum curas significationibus agere, insidiarum uias monstrare, futura praedicere*) is followed by the unambiguous and almost exclamatory condemnation *magnum nefas* which is positioned right at the beginning of the subsequent sentence. In this case, as in the previous instance of stargazing, the tone of Isidore's treatment is remarkably emphatic to underline his critical attitude and the warning character of his exposition.[76] This suggests that he does not get polemical for no

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[75] See esp. Kahlos 2007, p. 93–112, who writes: 'Christian writers transformed the relationship between *religio* and *superstitio*, condemning their previous polytheistic affiliation as a superstition and defended their new Christian devotion as a true religion. [...] In the Christian subversion of the traditional hierarchy of the dichotomy, Christianity became *religio*, the only true *religio*, whereas all other cults and beliefs were lumped together as *superstitio* or *falsa religio*' (Kahlos 2007, p. 97). See also Martin 2004, p. 207–25, 243 (with special reference to Eusebius) and Gassman 2020, p. 10–12. For a concise overview of secondary literature on the use of the term *superstitio* among Romans and Christians, see e.g. Isaac 2004, p. 466 with n. 120. Specifically on the pagan (esp. Roman) evidence, see De Labriolle 1948, esp. p. 44–45; Benko 1980; Wilken 1984, esp. p. 48–67; Fredouille 1986, p. 1133–1141; Isaac 2004, p. 484–91; Martin 2004, esp. p. 1–5, 125–35; and Gordon 2008; see also Clark 2004, p. 16–21.

[76] However, there are also passages as the following one, in which Isidore reports on a bird being interpreted as an omen without criticising such a view

particular reason, but that he writes in the interest of his audience. It also exhibits his ethical consciousness and his standards as a morally responsible Christian scholar.

To conclude this section, one needs to keep in mind that Christian attitudes towards pagan learning are by no means uniform. Even for one and the same writer one may not necessarily discern a fully coherent concept as to the handling of non-Christian material. Gemeinhardt has articulated this as follows:

> Die pagane Schulbildung ist ein Thema, das das Christentum von den Anfängen bis in die Spätantike (und weit darüber hinaus) beschäftigt hat—zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten, in unterschiedlichen literarischen und sozialen Kontexten und mit unterschiedlichen Antworten auf die Frage, ob, wie und in welchem Maße man sich Bildung aneignen solle. Dass es auf diese Frage eine einzige konsensfähige Antwort hätte geben können, erscheint angesichts der [...] Vielfalt von Autoren, Quellen und Diskursen von vornherein als unwahrscheinlich. In den vergleichsweise wenigen Fällen, wo von einem Autor schriftliche Zeugnisse in größerer Zahl erhalten sind, zeigt sich vielmehr oft sogar eine differenzierte bis disparate Haltung zur paganen Bildung bei ein und derselben Person.[77]

Isidore of Seville is not afraid of showing his familiarity with non-Christian Greek and Roman authorities in all kinds of disciplines. He frequently refers to their expertise in scholarly matters and quotes from pagan works to illustrate certain points. Such a general openness in his *Etymologiae* has been convincingly explained not only by his search for the semantic roots of words and the desire for their correct usage, but also by the needs of his target

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(*Etym.* 12.7.39): *Bubo a sono uocis conpositum nomen habet, auis feralis, onusta quidem plumis, sed graui semper detenta pigritia: in sepulcris die noctuque uersatur, et semper commorans in cauernis. De qua Ouidius: 'Foedaque fit uolucris uenturi nuntia luctus, | ignauus bubo dirum mortalibus omen'. Denique apud augures malum portendere fertur: nam cum in urbe uisa fuerit, solitudinem significare dicunt.* Such an inconsequent approach to topics which are generally presented as being doubtful is reminiscent of Pliny the Elder; see Fögen 2009, p. 232–34.

[77] Gemeinhardt 2007, p. 487. On the flexible and dynamic attitude towards paganism, see also Gemeinhardt 2007, p. 511: 'Das Verhältnis von Christentum und Bildung präsentiert sich [...] als lebendiger Prozess der Aneignung *und* kritischen Reflexion.'

audience.[78] Unlike many of his predecessors, Isidore may not have felt that paganism still posed a serious threat to Christian beliefs and values. In that regard, his epoch diverges significantly from previous periods. Nonetheless, under certain circumstances his approach to the pagan tradition is not without polemical elements, especially with regard to myths and polytheistic divinities. One may argue that such verbal attacks are in line with the conventions of many other patristic writers and that they were supposed to cater to the expectations of a typical Christian readership who would have found it awkward not to have any such critical comments. But this does not rule out that Isidore genuinely disliked the pagan ideas and concepts which he decries.

4. *Conclusion*

As in other areas of Greek and Roman society, the agonal principle can also be observed in the context of technical instruction and the transmission of learning. Ancient technical discourse instrumentalises polemics in different ways and for different purposes. It is grounded in argumentative structures to which technical authors may have recourse in order to promote their agenda and to distance themselves from competitors. Various groups vie with each other for the supremacy of the 'right' kind of knowledge and try to set themselves apart from their opponents by creating a consensus among their readers—mostly through the use of emotional language which is geared towards a powerful and memorable impression.[79] In addition to intellectual reasons, the desire for a demarcation from other groups is often ethically underpinned, namely by a claim for moral superiority over rival parties. Hence,

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[78] See Cardelle de Hartmann 2017, p. 103: 'Isidors Suche nach antikem Wissen ist von dem Interesse geleitet, die ursprüngliche Bedeutung und die richtige Verwendung von Wörtern und Begriffen zu bestimmen, was zu einer größeren Aufnahmebereitschaft gegenüber antikem Wissen als bei anderen christlichen Autoren führt. Zu dieser Offenheit dürfte auch beigetragen haben, dass er ein breites Publikum, das auch adlige Laien einschloss, ansprechen wollte. Deren Aneignung der lateinischen Sprache und Kultur war Teil eines politischen Programms. Mit ihrer weiten Perspektive haben die *Etymologiae* in späterer Zeit insgesamt die Suche nach weiterem Wissen, sogar die Beschäftigung mit antiker Literatur legitimiert und vorbereitet [...].'

[79] On 'Konsens und Konkurrenz', see also Asper 2007, p. 35–42.

whenever technical writing is fuelled with polemics and confrontation, it is as much about the diffusion of elements of culture and learning as it is about the self-presentation of technical writers as members of groups whose interests they feel entitled to represent and whose identity they want to consolidate. On a smaller level, these groups can be circles of experts or schools as academic institutions subscribing to certain doctrines; on a larger level, they may be defined in a rather loose fashion and comprise ethnic or religious communities, as in the cases discussed in this paper.

What the quarrels initiated by Roman and Christian technical writers have in common is a desire for emancipation from Greek and pagan lore which has undeniably stimulated their own thinking. In both instances, it is possible to witness representatives of a community who feel the need to develop their own tradition, but who realise that this can only be done through the creative engagement with the scholarly and scientific advancements of a superior, fully developed cultural entity. That this entailed a serious and often rather challenging balancing act between appropriation and rejection was almost inevitable. Neither Roman nor Christian technical discourse could have been written completely *sine ira et studio*. On the contrary, polemics was for the most part a necessity for Roman and Christian technical writers if the coveted project of emancipation from the Greek and pagan traditions was to be reasonably successful.[80]

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Abstract

Greek and Roman technical texts were not written in a vacuum or neutral climate; their authors often belonged to intellectual networks or even schools whose ideas, value systems and doctrines they were eager to promote. This also implies that they may pursue an explicit or implicit social, political or ethical agenda. Many ancient technical authors use certain strategies to create a particularly favourable image of themselves and to disparage authorities, past and present, working in the same or neighbouring disciplines. Polemics thus plays a crucial role in ancient technical discourse.

This paper deals with two different areas: first with polemics based upon ethnicity (Romans vs. Greeks) and second with attacks motivated by religious affiliation (pagans vs. Christians). The analysis will therefore be restricted to verbal attacks against larger groups of people rather than individuals. Among the texts discussed are Cicero's philosophical works, Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Jerome's letters and Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*.

What the quarrels initiated by Roman and Christian technical writers have in common is a desire for emancipation from Greek and pagan lore respectively. In both instances, it is possible to witness representatives of a community who feel the need to develop their own tradition, but who realise that this can only be done through the creative engagement with the scholarly and scientific advancements of an established cultural entity. That this entailed an often rather challenging balancing act between appropriation and rejection was almost inevitable. Polemics was for the most part a necessity for Roman and Christian technical writers if emancipation from the Greek and pagan traditions was supposed to be reasonably successful.

ARGYRO LITHARI

PLATONIC TEACHINGS
AND ASTRONOMERS' HYPOTHESES
IN THE PROEMIUM OF PROCLUS'
HYPOTYPOSIS ASTRONOMICARUM POSITIONUM

BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND AGREEMENT *

The *Hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum*[1] begins with the name of Plato who is highly praised by Proclus; he is called great (μέγας). Plato

> asks the true philosopher to put aside the senses and the whole wandering being and to astronomise above and beyond heaven and to examine there tardiness itself and swiftness itself in the true number (*Hyp.* I § 1, 2.1–4).[2]

These very first lines of the *Hypotyposis* may take the reader by surprise: Why does a treatise which, as its title denotes, is going to be devoted to the astronomers' hypotheses (i.e., explanatory geometrical models of the motions of the heavenly bodies) begin

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[1] I will refer to it as *Hypotyposis*.

[2] Proclus, *Hyp.* I § 1, 2.1–4: Πλάτων μὲν ὁ μέγας, ὦ ἑταῖρε, τόνγε ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφον ἀξιοῖ τὰς αἰσθήσεις χαίρειν ἀφέντα καὶ τὴν πλανωμένην ἅπασαν οὐσίαν οὐρανοῦ τε ὑπεραστρονομεῖν κἀκεῖ τὴν αὐτοβραδυτῆτα καὶ τὸ αὐτοτάχος ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ ἀριθμῷ σκοπεῖν.

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with a statement which seems to subvert such an enterprise? Indeed, immediately afterwards, the opposition between Plato's exhortations and the astronomers' work becomes manifest. While addressing the addressee[3] of the *Hypotyposis*, Proclus says:

> But you, however, seem to me to bring us from those spectacles down to these heavenly rotations and to the observations of the men being skillful in astronomy and to the hypotheses that they have contrived on the basis of these observations, which [hypotheses] some men like Aristarchus, Hipparchus and Ptolemy and other such people are accustomed to advertise. For you certainly wish to hear the proposals of these people as well, desiring so far as possible to leave nothing unexamined of the things that have been discovered by the ancient men while contemplating the universe (*Hyp.* I §§ 2, 3, 2.5–13).[4]

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[3] Proclus informs us that he started writing the *Hypotyposis* when he returned to Athens from Lydia in Asia Minor (*Hyp.* I §§ 4, 5, 2.14–18). According to Marinus' testimony (*Vita Procli* 15.14–35), Proclus was enforced by political turbulence and hostile attitude towards him to leave Athens for one year. He spent this time in Lydia. We do not know the exact dates of his stay in Lydia. In the *Hypotyposis* we read that he was offered hospitality by someone who asked him to deal, for his own sake, with the astronomical hypotheses about the celestial bodies. Thus, in the beginning of the *Hypotyposis* Proclus addresses the friend who had encouraged him to deal with these matters. But who is this friend from Lydia? In Proclus' biography (*Vita Procli* 29) Marinus mentions that at one time Proclus went to the temple of Asclepius in Athens together with Pericles from Lydia, where Proclus performed a miracle. Additionally, Simplicius in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, within the framework of a discussion about the primary matter and the knowledge of the underlying matter, quotes someone's opinion who is supposed to be a relatively contemporary philosopher and is called Pericles from Lydia (*in Phys.* I.227.25). It is noteworthy that both Marinus and Simplicius regard him as a notable philosopher. So, it would be reasonable to infer that Proclus addresses Pericles from Lydia in the opening of the *Hypotyposis*. In favour of this stand the fact that in the proemium of the first book of the *Platonic Theology* Proclus also addresses someone called Pericles (*Theol. plat.* I,1.6,7), as well as his reference to Pericles' view on some philosophical issues in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, where Pericles is introduced as one of his friends (*in Parm.* II.872.14–15 Steel).

[4] Proclus, *Hyp.* I §§ 2, 3, 2.5–13: σὺ δέ μοι φαίνῃ κατάγειν ἡμᾶς ἀπ' ἐκείνων τῶν θεαμάτων εἰς τὰς ἐν οὐρανῷ ταύτας περιόδους καὶ τὰς τῶν δεινῶν περὶ ἀστρονομίαν τηρήσεις καὶ τὰς ἐκ τούτων αὐτοῖς μεμηχανημένας ὑποθέσεις, ἃς Ἀρίσταρχοί τε καὶ Ἵππαρχοι καὶ Πτολεμαῖοι καὶ τοιοῦτοί τινες διαθρυλεῖν εἰώθασι. ποθεῖς γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὰς τούτων ἐπιβολὰς ἀκοῦσαι μηδὲν ἀδιερεύνητον κατὰ δύναμιν ἀπολιπεῖν τῶν τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἐξηυπορημένων ἐν τῇ θεωρίᾳ τῶν ὅλων προθυμούμενος.

Proclus had promised his friend to satisfy the desire he expressed and examine 'even these issues' (*Hyp.* I § 4, 2.15). Thus, the fulfilment of such a promise appears to be a sort of concession to his friend's demand: Proclus has to overlook for the moment the proper Platonic approach to the heavens and turn his attention to what the astronomers ended up believing about the celestial bodies through 'long and endless approaches' (*Hyp.* I § 5)—a phrase with unmistakably negative implications. But at least, according to his programmatic statements, he is not just going to present the astronomers' hypotheses, but also to scrutinise and test them (*Hyp.* I § 6).

From the outset of the *Hypotyposis* Proclus appears to juxtapose the Platonic teachings with the astronomers' doctrines. He, moreover, regards the treatment of the latter as an activity of lesser value, a sort of descent from the things with which the true philosopher, according to Plato, should deal. But since Proclus undertakes the task to present and implicitly assess the astronomers' hypotheses, it is reasonable to assume that he does not believe that they are entirely devoid of value. In this paper my aim is to spell out this juxtaposition by adumbrating two forms of astronomy— Plato's astronomy and the astronomers' astronomy, according to Proclus—and by clarifying their relation to each other. Thus, I will show that, despite the intrinsic differences between the two forms of astronomy, Proclus builds bridges between them. Finally, I will focus on the reasons that lead Proclus to retain certain reservations about the astronomers' hypotheses.

1. *Two Branches of Astronomy*

In the very first lines of the Proemium Proclus distinguishes two sorts of objects of knowledge related to the heavenly bodies: (i) heavenly bodies as objects of sense—their measurable properties and motions—and (ii) the Forms, in which the heavenly bodies participate and to which they owe their nature. These objects of knowledge constitute two distinct branches of astronomy, each of which is related to a different tradition. Proclus also considers one of these objects of knowledge (as well as its proponent) to be of a higher rank than the other, but he does not reject the inferior kind.

On the one hand, 'astronomy within the heaven' concerns the visible heaven as such, as we become aware of it by our experience. On the other hand, 'astronomy beyond the heaven' is actually the grasp of Forms over and beyond the physical being/ substance of the heavenly bodies. Proclus seems to invent the term ὑπεραστρονομεῖν based on a passage from the *Theaetetus*. In *Theaetetus* 172c3–177c2, Socrates says that philosophers are contemptuous of the occupations of the orators who spend their time massed in the courts of law, at the agora and other public places, restricted as they are to what they have at their feet and before their eyes. On the contrary, philosophers deal with, *inter alia*, astronomy beyond the heaven. Such an activity, Socrates adds, is integrated in their research of the universal nature of all real beings.[5] Proclus also alludes to this passage from the *Theaetetus* in his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* [*in Tim.*], where he describes Timaeus, a philosopher, as 'the best at astronomy' (ἀστρονομικώτατος), for he astronomises beyond the heaven (οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομῶν).[6] Here the difference between an astronomer and a philosopher who deals with the stars is clearly stated; it lies in the fact that the former is interested in the speeds of the celestial bodies, the calculation of their positions at certain times by means of tables (this is most probably a hint at tables of hourly/daily/monthly/annual mean motion of the celestial bodies produced by astronomers such as Ptolemy) and astrological issues, whereas the latter, like Timaeus, turns his attention to the realm beyond the heaven due to his genuine desire to grasp the *hidden* causes of the universe. Thus, Timaeus is described as the best at astronomy not despite the fact that he does not deal with the heaven in the way astronomers do, but just *because* he does *not deal* with the heaven as astronomers do. There is no agreement among the manuscripts of the *Hypotyposis* or the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* about the phrases οὐρανοῦ τε ὑπεραστρονομεῖν and οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομῶν. In the first, the reading οὐρανοῦ

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[5] Plato, *Theaetetus* 173e6: [ἡ δὲ διάνοια] οὐρανοῦ θ' ὕπερ ἀστρονομοῦσα.

[6] Proclus, *in Tim.* I.202.15–21: ἀστρονομικώτατος μὲν οὖν λέγεται νῦν ὁ Τίμαιος οὐχ ὡς τὰ τάχη τῶν κινήσεων ἐπεσκεμμένος οὐδ' ὡς μετρῶν δρόμον ἠελίου κανόνας συναθροίσας οὐδὲ τοῖς μοιραίοις ἔργοις ἐνδιατρίβων, ἀλλ' ὡς οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομῶν κατὰ τὸν ἐν Θεαιτήτῳ [173c–e] κορυφαῖον καὶ τὰς ἀφανεῖς αἰτίας θεωρῶν, ἃ καὶ κυρίως ἐστὶν ἄστρα.

τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομεῖν is also recorded, while in the second also the reading ὑπεραστρονομῶν is found in some manuscripts. Other instances of these phrases in Proclus' work do not enable us to make a final decision about whether the preposition ὑπέρ should or should not be taken as being detached from the verb ἀστρονομέω. In *in Tim.* III.277.15, the phrase οὐρανοῦ τε ὑπεραστρονομοῦντα refers again to the *Theaetetus* (no alternative writings are given in the critical apparatus) and *in Tim.* II.77.19 reads τὸ οὐρανοῦ τε ὑπεραστρονομεῖν.[7] But the *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* ([*in Parm.*] I.828.22–23 Steel) reads οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομῶμεν— no other writings are offered in the critical apparatus.[8] In any case, what is certain is that this mode of expression is congenial to Proclus who wishes to establish a way of astronomising not just different from but also higher than the usual astronomical practice. In other words, astronomy regarding the heaven as such employs our senses, whereas astronomy beyond the heaven does not content itself with the senses, for sensible perceptions hinder us from understanding the real nature of the heavenly bodies. We will be able to gain knowledge of their real nature, only if we contemplate the 'true number', as Proclus characteristically says.

It is obvious that Proclus from the outset wishes to distinguish two forms of astronomical inquiry. Since Proclus' own words in the opening lines of the *Hypotyposis* manifestly allude to Book VII of Plato's *Republic* [*Resp.*], we could better define these two approaches to the celestial bodies by drawing on the *Republic*. I quote the relevant passages:

> We should consider these decorations in the heaven, since they are embroidered on a visible surface, to be the most beautiful and most exact of such [visible] things. But we should consider their motions to fall far short of the true ones, namely, motions with which *swiftness itself and tardiness itself measured in the true number* and traced out with all true figures move in relation to one another and with which they move the things carried along in them. And these, of course,

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[7] This writing is recorded in codex Q. I accept neither the reading τὸ οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομῶν proposed by the editor of the text nor τὸ οὐρανοῦ τε ὑπεραστρονομῶν of codices M and P, since the combination of the definite article with the participle is infelicitous.

[8] The same holds for Luna & Segonds' edition (*in Parm.* III.828.29–30).

must be grasped by reason and (mathematical) reasoning, not by sight (*Resp*. 529c6–d5).[9]

Then, I [Socrates] said, we will study astronomy by means of problems, as we do geometry, and we will *let the things in the heaven alone*, if, by engaging in genuine astronomy, we are to make the naturally intelligent part of the soul useful instead of useless (*Resp*. 530b6–c2).[10]

In the *Republic*, Plato is interested in establishing an educational program for the rulers of his ideal city. Mathematics constitutes an indispensable part of this curriculum, and Plato designates the appropriate way of dealing with each branch of mathematics. Thus, while trying to understand Plato's views about astronomy as expressed in the *Republic*, we should keep in mind that Plato's intention is not to describe the objects and methods of contemporary astronomical research, but the terms in which this discipline can be rendered beneficial to future rulers so that they manage to contemplate the Forms and, mostly, the Form of the Good.[11] The discussion about astronomy as the fourth subject within the scope of mathematics (*Resp*. 529a–530d), in combination with the analogy of the Divided Line with its epistemological connotations, can help to reconstruct Plato's picture of astronomy: it is a 'dynamic process of enquiry' presenting 'continuous progress'.[12]

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[9] Plato, *Resp*. 529c6–d5: Ὧδε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ. ταῦτα μὲν τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ποικίλματα, ἐπείπερ ἐν ὁρατῷ πεποίκιλται, κάλλιστα μὲν ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ ἀκριβέστατα τῶν τοιούτων ἔχειν, τῶν δὲ ἀληθινῶν πολὺ ἐνδεῖν, ἃς τὸ ὂν τάχος καὶ ἡ οὖσα βραδυτὴς ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ ἀριθμῷ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀληθέσι σχήμασι φορᾶς τε πρὸς ἄλληλα φέρεται καὶ τὰ ἐνόντα φέρει, ἃ δὴ λόγῳ μὲν καὶ διανοίᾳ ληπτά, ὄψει δ' οὔ (trans. Grube 1997, modified). For quotations from the *Republic* I follow the Oxford Classical Text edition by Slings. Italics in this passage as well as in the following one are used for those phrases that remind one of Proclus' own wording.

[10] Plato, *Resp*. 530b6–c2: Προβλήμασιν ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, χρώμενοι ὥσπερ γεωμετρίαν οὕτω καὶ ἀστρονομίαν μέτιμεν, τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐάσομεν, εἰ μέλλομεν ὄντως ἀστρονομίας μεταλαμβάνοντες χρήσιμον τὸ φύσει φρόνιμον ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐξ ἀχρήστου ποιήσειν (trans. Grube 1997, modified). Other translations of this passage are discussed later.

[11] Burnyeat 2000, p. 6–9 argues that mathematics within the framework of the Platonic training has an intrinsic and not an instrumental value in grasping the Forms. Mathematics enables us to transcend the world of senses and approach the goodness in the universe and, since goodness with its varieties constitute the real, objective world, mathematics reveals the 'world as it is objectively speaking' to us.

[12] Gregory 1996, p. 451, 453.

This sort of enquiry regarding the heavenly bodies consists of two 'parts'/'phases', the one referring to the sensibles (the heavenly bodies as perceived with our senses) and the other to the intelligibles (the Forms in which they participate). Both of them are equally necessary for our investigation, if we aspire to gain an overall knowledge about the heavenly bodies and, afterwards, to approach the Good. We normally begin our investigation with an empirical approach; we afterwards proceed to the upper level of knowledge, i.e., the intelligibles; and we descend to the sensibles in order to comprehend them now in the light of the Forms.[13]

The phrase εἰ μέλλομεν ὄντως ἀστρονομίας μεταλαμβάνοντες [...] ποιήσειν in *Resp.* 530c1–2 has triggered a debate among modern scholars about its translation and, consequentially, about its implications for Plato's view on astronomy. Reconstruction of the whole scholarly dispute falls outside the scope of this paper.[14] However, it is necessary to discuss, even briefly, three possible translations of this phrase in order to avoid misinterpretations of Proclus' views, given that Proclus draws heavily on Plato.

The adverb ὄντως may qualify ἀστρονομίας or μεταλαμβάνοντες or ποιήσειν.[15] From a syntactical point of view, nothing compels us to favour one opinion over the other. If we take ὄντως together with ἀστρονομίας and render it as 'real/genuine astronomy', it is implied that, apart from the astronomy of the Platonic curriculum, there is another kind of astronomy, not so genuine and undervalued. The second reading (i.e., 'by *really* engaging in astronomy') seems to be more natural and focuses on the need to put aside the visual data in order to gain *in fact* a knowledge of the heavenly bodies *to the greatest extent*, that is to grasp the truth behind them, i.e., the Forms. The third possible option (i.e., 'if, by engaging in astronomy, we are to *actually* make the naturally intelligent part of the soul useful instead of useless') produces an interpretation relatively similar to the second one, for it focuses

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[13] Gregory 1996, p. 453–55.

[14] For an informative presentation and for references to advocates of different positions, see Gregory 1996, p. 451, 462–65.

[15] I would like to thank Spyridon Rangos for proposing this third possible translation of the passage. To my knowledge, such a translation is not mentioned in the scholarly literature, but I consider it fruitful and I have tried to elaborate on it.

on the idea that we are able to succeed in preparing our souls for the contemplation of the Forms only by circumventing the celestial phenomena. This translation is quite plausible, since other passages of Book VII also put emphasis on the *aim* of studying astronomy in this manner.[16]

In his *Commentary on the Republic* [*in Remp.*], Proclus does not focus on the interpretation of the aforementioned passage. But we can speculate about his understanding of that passage. One could indeed claim that Proclus would not object to the second and third translation mentioned above, since they tally well with his views on the use of mathematics in the Prologues of his *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* [*in Eucl*]. More specifically, in the first Prologue of that *Commentary* Proclus refers to *Resp.* 527d–e and emphasises that mathematics helps the eye of our soul see the light of the Intellect instead of darkness, that is to ascend from the sense-perceptible world to the upper world of immaterial and partless being.[17] But it is not to be overlooked that in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* Proclus explicitly speaks of *the* genuine astronomy and identifies it with the astronomy above the heaven (*in Tim.* II.77.18,19: καὶ ἡ ὄντως ἀστρονομία περὶ ἐκεῖνα [sc. τὸ νοερὸν ἢ νοητὸν]· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομεῖν[18]). In this passage Proclus appears to refer to an astronomy which investigates the intelligible and intellective spherical shape which the celestial bodies imitate in an inferior manner, manifesting thus the sense-perceptible spherical shape just as a deficient image of the true (intelligible or intellective) sphere. This astronomy is implicitly juxtaposed with an astronomy which investigates the sense-perceptible manifestations of the celestial bodies. By referring to the former as ἡ ὄντως, Proclus stresses its higher value in comparison with the latter. And indeed,

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[16] See, for instance, Plato, *Resp.* 527d7–e3: ἐν τούτοις τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἑκάστου ὄργανόν τι ψυχῆς ἐκκαθαίρεταί τε καὶ ἀναζωπυρεῖται ἀπολλύμενον καὶ τυφλούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων, κρεῖττον ὂν σωθῆναι μυρίων ὀμμάτων· μόνῳ γὰρ αὐτῷ ἀλήθεια ὁρᾶται, 529a1,2: αὕτη γε ἀναγκάζει ψυχὴν εἰς τὸ ἄνω ὁρᾶν καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε ἄγει, 529b3–5: ἐγὼ γὰρ αὖ οὐ δύναμαι ἄλλο τι νομίσαι ἄνω ποιοῦν ψυχὴν βλέπειν μάθημα ἢ ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἂν περὶ τὸ ὄν τε ᾖ καὶ τὸ ἀόρατον. All mathematical studies share this aim. See, e.g., Plato, *Resp.* 523a1–3, 524e1, 525c5,6, 526d6–e5, 527b8–10.

[17] Proclus, *in Eucl.* 20.14–21.4. See also 28.4–7.

[18] For this specific reading see footnote 7.

this astronomy is entitled to be called genuine, since it deals with things which possess an absolutely true existence.

The characterisation of the astronomy beyond the heaven as ὄντως is not meant to imply that observational-mathematical astronomy should be definitely rejected. To my mind, Plato wants us to see that both approaches are equally admissible and real, to the extend that they serve different purposes and use different methods: astronomers strive to examine the *apparent* anomalies which characterise the motion of the celestial bodies, and this is the reason why they look upwards, whereas the aim of future rulers is to gain knowledge of the intelligible and *most real* being through the study of solids in motion by means of problems.[19] In favour of this interpretation stands the fact that Socrates does not hesitate to refer to the 'real astronomer', when referring to observation-based astronomy.[20]

Along the lines of the Platonic view on astronomical inquiry (as a continuous enterprise consisting of distinct phases) we could understand Proclus' relevant but still somewhat implicit views in the *Hypotyposis*. In support of this interpretation, one can refer to Dissertation XII (*On the Cave in Book VII of the Republic*) of his *Commentary on Plato's Republic*. Before explaining the division between the objects of opinion (δοξαστά) and the objects of knowledge (γνωστά) suggested by the allegory of the Cave, Proclus briefly gives his account of the analogy of the Divided Line (*In Platonis Rempublicam* [*in Remp.*] I.288.20–292.21). He then explains that the various beings are represented by means of a continuous line divided into unequal sections. To his mind, the line is uninterrupted on purpose; in order to indicate (i) the continuous downward progression of all beings from the One (the most primary principle), (ii) the likeness of the ontologically inferior beings to the ontologically superior beings, (iii) the likeness of all the beings to the One and (iv) the reversion of all beings to the One. Such a resemblance among the beings constitutes a sort

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[19] For astronomers see Plato, *Resp.* 529b5–c2, 530a4–b4. For future rulers studying astronomy see Plato, *Resp.* 528d9,10, 530b6,7.

[20] Plato, *Resp.* 530a3–7: Τῷ ὄντι δὴ ἀστρονομικόν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὄντα οὐκ οἴει ταὐτὸν πείσεσθαι εἰς τὰς τῶν ἄστρων φορὰς ἀποβλέποντα; νομιεῖν μὲν ὡς οἷόν τε κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα συστήσασθαι, οὕτω συνεστάναι τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ αὐτόν τε καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ.

of unity, reflecting thus the unity of the first principle. Proclus also adds that continuity—the fundamental trait of the line—is closely related to the One.[21] In the beginning of Dissertation XII, in a passage devoted exclusively to the Divided Line, Proclus does not really speak of the various types of knowledge corresponding to the various classes of beings. He seems to comment on the analogy of the Divided Line from an ontological point of view.[22] The epistemological implications of it, however, are disclosed by the correlation between this and the allegory of the Cave drawn later on by Proclus.[23] He thinks that the allegory of the Cave is based on the division of the beings already proposed by the analogy of the Divided Line and, furthermore, that the former supplements the latter by introducing a division of the states of cognition corresponding to the various beings.[24] So, since the various beings form a continuous series that starts from the first principle and reverts upon it, it can be inferred that, according to Proclus, the corresponding types of knowledge,[25] despite differing from one another in method and epistemological value, also add up to a continuous path from the lower substances to the higher and real beings. None of these forms of knowledge is useless or redundant for the human souls which have fallen from the realm of the intel-

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[21] Proclus, *in Remp*. I.288.6–19.

[22] d'Hoine 2018, p. 575–76.

[23] Proclus, *in Remp*. I.293.

[24] Proclus, *in Remp*. I.287.25–288.2, 292.22–24, 293.4–5.

[25] The term γνῶσις (knowledge/cognition) in its narrow sense is used only for the things that truly exist (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα), namely only for the intelligibles (νοητά). Ἐπιστήμη (science/knowledge proper) can be aware of them by investigating their true underlying causes (ἀπ' αἰτίας γνωστὸν τὸ ἐπιστητόν). Thus, only the intelligibles—the real beings—are entitled to be called knowable (ἐπιστητά, γνωστά), or to be more specific, knowable in the primary sense (κυρίως ἐπιστητόν). The knowable things (τὰ γνωστά) are juxtaposed with the objects of opinion (τὰ δοξαστά). The sense-perceptible things (τὰ αἰσθητά) which are 'known' to us by assumption (εἰκασία) and belief (πίστις) and do not have a certainly true existence (πῇ μὲν ὄν, πῇ δὲ μὴ ὄν) are not considered to be knowable, but, instead, objects of opinion (δοξαστά). However, Proclus sometimes refers to all these manners of approaching things (either the real beings or the images and copies of them) as types of cognition/knowledge (γνώσεις) in a looser sense, for instance when he introduces the Platonic analogy of the Divided Line: διὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ διαιρέσει συμπληρώσας αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ ἕκτῳ τὴν εἰκόνα ταύτην ἔπλασεν εὐθὺς ἀρχόμενος τοῦ ἑβδόμου, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ εἰκόνι πάλιν ἔλαβεν τὴν προρρηθεῖσαν διαίρεσιν, τὰς γνώσεις συνδιαιρούμενος καὶ ἐφ' οἷς εἰσιν αἱ γνώσεις, ὡς αὐτὸς εἶπεν· (Proclus, *in Remp*. I.287.25–288.2). For these terms and their usage see *in Remp*. I.269–96.

ligibles, have come into contact with the material world and have been affected by the vice and deceptiveness inherent in materiality. The true philosopher is expected to surpass the lower levels of cognition, i.e., assumption (εἰκασία) and belief (πίστις), which together constitute opinion (δόξα), and ascend to the higher ones, i.e., reasoning (διάνοια) and science/knowledge proper (ἐπιστήμη), which together constitute understanding/intellection (νόησις). Then, having become aware of the real (intelligible) entities, the philosopher will be able to correctly evaluate the status of the (sensible) objects of opinion and adopt a critical stance towards the senses.[26] In the framework of this continuous cognitive enterprise, ἡ ὄντως ἀστρονομία (or, in other words, τὸ οὐρανοῦ τε ὕπερ ἀστρονομεῖν) occupies the highest level of cognition; it constitutes the capstone of this upwards path to the Good.

Let us now try to further determine the branches of astronomy that correspond to the two sorts of objects of inquiry concerning the heavenly bodies. The astronomical approach chosen by Plato for educational purposes is juxtaposed with astronomy as practiced by astronomers in his time. To his mind, some people who philosophise resort to astronomy as practiced by astronomers and as a result fail to lead human souls to the contemplation of the intelligible beings.[27] This is the reason why Proclus points out that Plato's exhortations regarding the way in which someone should deal with the heaven are addressed to the real philosopher (ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφον).[28] Moreover, in the *Republic* the

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[26] The effort of a human soul to ascend to the intelligible world varies with the degree to which it has descended into the material world (O'Meara 1989, p. 152–55).

[27] Plato, *Resp.* 529a6–7: Ὡς μὲν νῦν αὐτὴν μεταχειρίζονται οἱ εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ἀνάγοντες, πάνυ ποιεῖν κάτω βλέπειν, 529c4–6: ἀλλὰ πῶς δὴ ἔλεγες δεῖν ἀστρονομίαν μανθάνειν παρὰ ἃ νῦν μανθάνουσιν, εἰ μέλλοιεν ὠφελίμως πρὸς ἃ λέγομεν μαθήσεσθαι, 530c2–3: Ἦ πολλαπλάσιον, ἔφη, τὸ ἔργον ἢ ὡς νῦν ἀστρονομεῖται προστάττεις, 530e5–7: Μή ποτ' αὐτῶν τι ἀτελὲς ἐπιχειρῶσιν ἡμῖν μανθάνειν οὓς θρέψομεν, καὶ οὐκ ἐξῆκον ἐκεῖσε ἀεί, οἳ πάντα δεῖ ἀφήκειν, οἷον ἄρτι περὶ τῆς ἀστρονομίας ἐλέγομεν.

[28] The phrase ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφον confirms that in the beginning of the Proemium Proclus addresses those who are fully conversant with Plato's *Republic*, since it brings to mind φιλοσοφία ἀληθῆ in *Resp.* 521c5–8. For Plato's demand about the true philosopher, according to Proclus (*Hyp.* I § 1, 2.1–5), cf. Plato, *Resp.* 485a10–b3: Τοῦτο μὲν δὴ τῶν φιλοσόφων φύσεων πέρι ὡμολογήσθω ἡμῖν ὅτι μαθήματός γε ἀεὶ ἐρῶσιν ὃ ἂν αὐτοῖς δηλοῖ ἐκείνης τῆς οὐσίας τῆς ἀεὶ οὔσης καὶ μὴ πλανωμένης ὑπὸ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς.

astronomy in question downgrades the value of observations, for, if someone restricts himself to the sensibles, the truth about the real heaven is concealed. The truth can be reached only by means of reason (λόγῳ) and (mathematical) reasoning (διανοίᾳ);[29] this is why we have to avoid being immured in the appearances. So, Proclus' one branch of astronomy, the astronomy beyond the heaven (οὐρανοῦ ὑπεραστρονομεῖν), corresponds to Plato's astronomy suitable for the education of the guardians, and in view of this connection we could call it 'philosophical astronomy'. In support of such an interpretation, one could refer to Proclus' *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, where he argues that 'the science of geometry as a whole' (τὴν ὅλην γεωμετρίαν, *in Eucl.* 61.25,26) 'always *philosophizes* about being in the manner of geometry' (γεωμετρικῶς δὲ περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἀεὶ φιλοσοφοῦσα, *in Eucl.* 62.26–63.1). The philosophical activity of geometry consists in 'leading the geometrical inquiry to more perfect and more intellectual insight, while emancipating it from the images projected in imagination'. As such it seeks 'to obtain a superior vision of the partless, unextended and essential geometrical ideas'. In that case, geometry is considered to have achieved its own 'culmination'.[30] So, since astronomy beyond the heaven and geometry in its culmination, that is, geometry as a sort of philosophical inquiry, try to grasp the intelligibles, it is possible to regard this particular form of astronomy as philosophical.[31] From this perspective, one could further infer that Proclus has a true astronomy and a true astronomer in mind at the beginning of the *Hypotyposis* in much the same way as he speaks, in his *Commentary on Euclid*, of the 'true

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[29] This is to be understood in the sense that *λόγος* offers the principles/criteria for knowing the truth and *διάνοια* is the presupposed preparatory stage for reaching the truth on the basis of those principles/criteria.

[30] Proclus, *in Eucl.* 55.13–23: εἰ δέ ποτε συμπτύξασα τὰς διαστάσεις καὶ τοὺς τύπους καὶ τὸ πλῆθος ἀτυπώτως καὶ ἑνοειδῶς θεασαμένη πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἐπιστρέψαι δυνηθείη, τότ' ἂν διαφερόντως τοὺς λόγους τοὺς γεωμετρικοὺς ἴδοι τοὺς ἀμερίστους, τοὺς ἀδιαστάτους, τοὺς οὐσιώδεις, ὧν ἐστι πλήρωμα. καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια αὐτῆς αὕτη τέλος ἂν εἴη τὸ ἄριστον τῆς περὶ γεωμετρίαν σπουδῆς καὶ ὄντως τῆς Ἑρμαϊκῆς δόσεως ἔργον, ἀπό τινος Καλυψοῦς ἀναγούσης αὐτὴν εἰς τελειοτέραν καὶ νοερωτέραν γνῶσιν καὶ ἀπολυούσης τῶν ἐν φαντασίᾳ μορφωτικῶν ἐπιβολῶν (trans. Morrow 1970).

[31] Based on Proclus' views on the astronomy suitable for the philosopher expressed here and there in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Segonds also calls this form of astronomy philosophical (Segonds 1987, p. 167).

geometer' (τὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς γεωμετρικόν) who manages to reach the culminant points of his geometrical inquiry.[32]

The other aspect of astronomy could be called observational astronomy. Plato does not seem to reject observations as useless for the progress and enrichment of astronomical knowledge in general. In particular, observations are a prerequisite step for forming a complete picture of the celestial phenomena and the truth behind them, even if such an aspect of astronomy is not important for the education of the guardians. According to Proclus, who follows Plato, this aspect of astronomy is practiced by astronomers; prominent representatives are Aristarchus, Hipparchus and Ptolemy. His reference to these astronomers, who constructed explanatory geometrical models, implies that this aspect of astronomy, which we have labelled 'observational', employs mathematics in order to provide explanations of the perplexing celestial phenomena and is not a merely empirical activity aiming, at best, at making predictions as precise as possible on the position of the heavenly bodies.

Both philosophical and observational astronomy require the use of mathematical concepts but for different purposes. In the first case, they are used in order to distract the philosopher's soul from sense-perceptible things and lead it to real beings (Forms) and real numbers (Form-numbers). Motions of the heavenly bodies, just like diagrams of geometry, give rise to abstract mathematical problems. Philosophical astronomy could be described as abstract kinematics—solids in motion.[33] Mathematical reasoning as a cognitive activity should be understood as a presupposition for the grasp of real, intelligible entities. In the second case, astronomers suggested geometrical models in order to explain visible celestial motions, thus keeping them into the realm of the sensibles.

2. *Bridging the Gap between the Two Forms of Astronomy*

Proclus characterises astronomers as δεινοί (*Hyp*. I § 2, 2.7); this adjective means that someone is competent and experienced in

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[32] Proclus, *in Eucl*. 55.18–56.4.
[33] Mourelatos 1981, p. 13–15; Burnyeat 2000, p. 12, 14, 15, 17, 18.

doing something specific, but has also negative connotations, for it alludes to someone who may be so competent that he may be considered to be crafty and guileful. A person characterised as δεινός provokes a mixture of admiration and fear (δεινός<δέος). The twofold meaning of this characterisation is reinforced by the participle μεμηχανημένας (*Hyp*. I § 2, 2.8), usually carrying negative overtones; astronomers contrive (<μηχανάομαι) hypotheses in order to explain the phenomena, but these contrivances may be the result of cunning expertise. Proclus recognises and appreciates the astronomers' work, while at the same time his disdainful and scornful stance towards them implicitly emerges from the plural form of the names of the most prominent of them (*Hyp*. I § 2, 2.9).[34] He, moreover, accuses them of being complacent about the explanatory models (hypotheses) they develop and put forward (*Hyp*. I § 6, 4.11,12: ἐφ' αἷς [ὑποθέσεσι] καλλωπιζόμενοι). Proclus' sarcastic tone can also be sensed when he says that they are accustomed to advertise their theories (*Hyp*. I § 3, 2.10: διαθρυλλεῖν εἰώθασι). The astronomers' approaches to the heavenly bodies seem to Proclus to be problematic, they are 'long and endless' (*Hyp*. I § 5, 4.6).

Proclus' stance towards astronomers gradually changes within the Proemium. His initial scepticism (*Hyp*. I §§ 1, 3, 5, 6) is mitigated by his establishing the correctness of the fundamental principles accepted in their investigations (*Hyp*. I §§ 7–10). In addition to this, Proclus recognises the astronomers' patience and systematicity in their research, and he welcomes the predominant eccentric and epicyclic models, especially in their Ptolemaic version (*Hyp*. I §§ 32–35). As for the correct underlying hypothesis of the astronomers which sparks their curiosity and prompts them to be puzzled by the heavenly bodies, we read:

> Thus, it seems to me that I have to first say which phenomena they mainly disbelieved and they turned to searching for the cause of each of them, rightly assuming that the motions of the divine bodies must be in circle and ordered, even if 'in circle' is neither the same in all those divine bodies, nor unmixed with what is not such, but in any case even this 'in circle' is

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[34] Plural number is also used to convey generality; Proclus often refers to astronomers in general. I owe this point to Fabio Acerbi.

ordered. For moving always in the same way and according to a single law and a single order, which is consistent with itself, would be suitable for the most divine visible beings, as stated especially by those men who claim that all those bodies revolve in accordance with *Nous*; for *Nous* always provides order to everything that he supervises. And since they hold this underlying opinion as a safe anchor, they reasonably appear to be already dissatisfied with this apparent disorder and that is why they seek what hypotheses would reveal that the revolutions of those circles are accomplished rationally, instead of being irrational, and have been determined with numbers suitable for each circle, instead of moving in an undetermined and unordered manner (*Hyp*. I §§ 7–9).[35]

Proclus maintains that astronomers assume (ὑποθέμενοι) that the heavenly bodies are divine beings who always move in circles in a regular and ordered manner. The phrase μάλιστα τοῖς κατὰ νοῦν ἐκεῖνα πάντα περιάγεσθαι τιθεμένοις (*Hyp*. I § 8, 4.22,23) indicates that the commitment to the divinity of the celestial bodies and its further implications about their motions are primarily dictated by Neoplatonic teachings, but are also shared by the astronomers regardless of their strictly Neoplatonic foundation. Thus, this sort of hypothesis is nothing more than the metaphysical truth that the heavenly bodies, despite being sensible, are gods, who participate in *Nous*, that contains all the Forms.[36] *Nous* provides the uni-

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[35] *Hyp*. I §§ 7–9: Ὧδε οὖν μοι δοκεῖ χρῆναι πρῶτον εἰπεῖν, τίσι μάλιστα τῶν φαινομένων ἀπιστήσαντες ἐπὶ ζήτησιν ἐτράποντο τῆς ἑκάστων αἰτίας, τοῦτο μὲν ὀρθῶς ὑποθέμενοι τὸ τὰς κινήσεις τῶν θείων σωμάτων ἐγκυκλίους δεῖν καὶ τεταγμένας ὑπάρχειν, εἰ καὶ τὸ ἐγκύκλιον οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐν πᾶσιν ἐκείνοις, οὐδὲ ἄμικτον πρὸς τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν καὶ τοῦτο πάντως τεταγμένον. τὸ γὰρ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ καθ᾽ ἕνα λόγον φέρεσθαι καὶ μίαν τάξιν αὐτὴν καθ᾽ ἑαυτὴν ὁμολογοῦσαν πρέποι ἄν που τοῖς θειοτάτοις τῶν φανερῶν μάλιστα τοῖς κατὰ νοῦν ἐκεῖνα πάντα περιάγεσθαι τιθεμένοις· νοῦς γὰρ ἀεὶ τάξεως χορηγός ἐστιν ἅπασιν, οἷς ἂν ἐπιστατῇ. ταύτης δὲ ὥσπερ ἀσφαλοῦς πείσματος ἐξεχόμενοι τῆς ὑπονοίας [καὶ] εἰκότως ἤδη δυσχεραίνειν φαίνονται πρὸς τὴν φαινομένην ταύτην ἀταξίαν [καὶ] ζητοῦντες, τίνες ὑποθέσεις αὐτοῖς ἀντὶ μὲν ἀλόγων κατὰ λόγον ἐπιτελουμένας τὰς περιόδους ἀποφήναιεν <ἐπὶ> τῶν κύκλων ἐκείνων, ἀντὶ δὲ ἀορίστως καὶ ἀτάκτως φερομένων ὡρισμένας ἀριθμοῖς τοῖς προσήκουσιν ἑκάστοις.

[36] For Proclus the Forms are, on the one hand, distinct from the divine *Nous*. More specifically, they are prior to it, in the sense that they are found in an intelligible manner within the Living Being. On the other hand, the divine *Nous* contains the Forms in a way appropriate to its own (lower) rank; in an intellective way. By contemplating the Forms as its own objects of contemplation, *Nous* distinguishes them from each other according to their particular essence (d'Hoine 2017, p. 100, 102–04, 109, 110).

verse with order and, as a result, the motion of the heavenly gods participating in *Nous* is inevitably characterised by order and regularity. In other words, lack of regularity would be incompatible with their divine nature and their immediate participation in *Nous*. More specifically, according to standard Neoplatonic doctrine, which is consistent with Platonic and Aristotelian insights, heavenly bodies, having been separated from *Nous* only to a small extent, are gods who move, whereas *Nous* does not move. Nevertheless, they carry out the best possible motion; they move in circular orbits in order to imitate *Nous'* unchangeability.[37] Proclus places much emphasis on the soundness of the fundamental principle about order and regularity in celestial rotations by drawing a parallel between this belief and a firm anchor mooring a ship to the bottom of the sea (*Hyp*. I §§ 8, 9, 4.23–6.5). So, Proclus argues, this sort of hypothesis adequately explains why astronomers regard the apparent anomalies in the heaven as problematic (δυσχεραίνειν) and thus in need of interpretation. It appears that this hypothesis, as it is called by Proclus, is not of the same rank as the hypotheses articulated by astronomers. It serves as the starting point of the observational-mathematical astronomy; it is the underlying principle and it predetermines the astronomers' approaches to the appearances. This means that astronomers' explanations should never disregard this premise, since such a practice would mean that the role of *Nous* in the universe and the divinity of the heavenly bodies are impeached (*Hyp*. I § 36, 18.21–25). One could say that this hypothesis is in fact beyond the scope of the astronomers' inquiries, but it still influences their research. Consequentially, their own hypotheses have to explain the celestial motions in terms of the fewest and simplest motions, since such motions are the most appropriate to the simplicity of the divine nature of the celestial bodies (*Hyp*. I § 34, 18.5–9). In a nutshell, this hypothesis, being part of the whole field of knowledge about the celestial bodies, is primarily established and fully grasped by those who examine the real hidden causes of the motions of the celestial bodies, but also enters the astronomers' enterprise. And exactly this is the reason why the more an astronomical hypothesis shows respect

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[37] See, for instance, Proclus, *in Tim*. II.77.16–18, III.117.2–31, 119.26–30.

for such principles (i.e., divinity and simplicity of the nature of the celestial bodies and, thus, circularity and uniformity of their motions—*Hyp.* I § 35, 18.9: ἀρχαῖς), the more successful it will be. Consequently, from this perspective it seems that astronomy beyond the heaven and astronomy within the heaven appear to be not that distant from each other, for the former lays in fact the foundation for the latter.

3. *Proclus' Reservations about the Astronomers' Hypotheses*

Proclus submits that astronomers 'seek what hypotheses would reveal that the revolutions of those circles are accomplished rationally' (*Hyp.* I § 9, 6.1,2). More specifically, 'having started from the aforementioned principles towards the harmony of the appearances' (*Hyp.* I § 35, 18.10,11), they try to 'demonstrate the things they are seeking for' (*Hyp.* I § 34, 18.7) by 'referring the apparent anomalies to *most reasonable* causes' (*Hyp.* I § 36, 18.20). Thus, it seems that, according to Proclus, the explanatory power of the astronomers' hypotheses is limited due to their probabilistic character and, consequently, that the hypotheses themselves can be questioned and even denied. The indisputable correctness of the astronomers' metaphysical premises about the nature of the heavenly bodies does not imply that their theories about the motions of these bodies are equally indisputable.

Although it is not clearly stated in the Proemium of the *Hypotyposis*, taking into consideration what has already been established about the two forms of astronomy, one could claim that the limited value of the astronomers' hypotheses is due to the fact that they concern the *sensible* (corporeal) aspects of the heavenly bodies. The astronomers' explanatory attempts overlook the fact that the heavenly bodies are self-moving, since they have souls which participate in *Nous*. As a result, the astronomers promote the idea that the causes of their motions are only physical and that the motions themselves can be represented and understood beyond any doubt by means of, for instance, epicyclic, eccentric or eccentrepicyclic models. These models end up having a mechanistic character: they are merely human contrivances (*Hyp.* I § 2, 2.8) which are restricted to a physical-mechanical causation and ignore the final causes which dictate the particular 'behaviour' of each celes-

tial body.[38] Those final causes refer to the volitions of the heavenly souls, which try to 'behave' in such a way as to be in that condition which is the best possible for themselves according to *Nous*.[39]

Proclus differs from the astronomers neither in the actual observation of the celestial phenomena[40] nor in the critical stance towards astronomical theories—for even the astronomers disagree with each other; this is the reason why they do not always offer the same explanations (*Hyp*. I § 33, 16.25–18.2). The basic difference between Proclus and the astronomers lies in the special element he introduces into the science of astronomy; the philosopher is for the most part not interested in the positions and trajectories of the corporeal heavenly objects but in the real causes of the celestial motions and, to this end, he introduces final causes (*Hyp*. I § 8). *Nous* acts as the final cause of the heavenly bodies; their participation in *Nous* is the cause of their always moving in a well-ordered and regular manner. Nevertheless, in the *Hypotyposis* Proclus abandons the astronomy beyond the heaven and descends to the level of the astronomical hypotheses. Why does he make such a concession? First of all, astronomical models are able to describe the paths of the celestial bodies and explain the apparent anomalies in the sky by analysing the complex heavenly motions into simple, circular and uniform motions. In particular, given that Pythagoras' main demand was the simplicity of the models put forward, eccentric and epicyclic hypotheses were deemed by the Pythagoreans as palatable, since they are simpler than other ones. The authority of Pythagoras prompts Proclus to take seriously eccentrics and epicycles into consideration (*Hyp*. I § 34).[41] Second, one may assume that Proclus believed that the presenta-

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[38] For μεμηχανημένας ὑποθέσεις see also Segonds 1987, p. 169.

[39] Opsomer 2012, p. 86, 88, 89, 92, 95, 103, 104. Opsomer also points out that, although Proclus considers the astronomical hypotheses as mechanistic, he does not hold the same view about the physical models which represent the universe and the motions performed within the heaven. The latter are deemed to be simply useful for the study of astronomy, and this is the reason why Plato recommended the use of them, in so far as their simulative character is not ignored.

[40] *Hyp*. I § 18, 10.10–13, § 21, 12.1–4, § 23, 12.14–16 and § 32 indicate Proclus' and his fellow philosophers' engagement in observational activities.

[41] As O'Meara notices, 'Proclus' usual practice is to cite the 'Pythagoreans' in general, rather than specific Pythagorean authorities and works' (O'Meara 1989, p. 149, n. 391).

tion of the geometrical and kinematic features of the astronomical models familiarises his students with mathematical objects and notions; such an activity was part and parcel of the (Neo)platonic curriculum for those who wished to study dialectics. Third, one should bear in mind that Proclus writes this treatise in the fifth century AD when astronomy had already made great progress since Plato's time. Proclus could not have overlooked it. Thus, he might have felt the need to take into consideration the achievements of contemporary astronomical science and to show to all those who fail to adequately understand Plato that the Platonic truth about the universe is not at stake. The presentation and study of the astronomical hypotheses does not prevent Proclus from indicating their weaknesses (*Hyp*. I § 6). On the contrary, Plato's teachings are always present and may be employed as criteria for evaluating them.

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Abstract

In the Proemium of the *Hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum* Proclus distinguishes between the heavenly bodies as sense-perceptible beings carrying out quantifiable motions and the Forms in which the heavenly bodies participate and to which they owe their nature. These two objects of knowledge constitute two distinct aspects of astronomy, each of which is related to a different tradition. Proclus' former aspect of astronomy could be called 'observational-mathematical astronomy' and is practiced by astronomers; the other one, 'astronomy beyond the heaven', corresponds to Plato's astronomy suitable for the education of the guardians (*Republic* VII): in view of this connection and certain passages from Proclus' *Commentaries on the Timaeus* and *Euclid's Elements*, we could call it 'philosophical astronomy'. The higher value of the latter and the mechanistic character of astronomers' hypotheses explain Proclus' different stance towards the proponents of the two aforementioned ways of examining the heavenly bodies: deep respect for Plato's thought, as opposed to reservations about the astronomers' work. Nevertheless, the reasonable, even if limited, explanatory power of the astronomers' hypotheses shields them from an overall rejection on the part of Proclus.

PART 5

CHRISTIAN AND
ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMIC

IRMGARD MÄNNLEIN-ROBERT

SUBTLE BATTLES OR: PLATONIC EXEGESIS AS POLEMICAL STRATEGY IN PORPHYRY *

The Platonic philosopher Porphyry is, in many respects, an important figure amongst the Platonists of the late third century AD: as a pupil of the literary critic and Platonist Longinus in Athens, he received a solid training in philology and exegesis, and later, as a pupil of the charismatic philosopher Plotinus in Rome, he became familiar with Plotinus' (markedly different) interpretation of Plato and devoted himself to his philosophy. In his writings Porphyry reflects numerous methodical and dogmatic characteristics of his two teachers. He distinguished himself, however, from them in the latter half of his life and developed his very own philosophical profile, one which encompassed the systematic examination of the logical writings of Aristotle as well as various aspects of religious philosophy. The Platonist Porphyry turns out to be a key figure, especially for understanding the religious scene in Rome in the late third century AD. From his *Vita Plotini* [*Plot.*] (written *c.* AD 301), as well as from other writings by him, we learn about religious groups in contemporary Rome and elsewhere and their philosophical claims. In his best-known polemical text, the *Contra Christianos* [*Chr.*], Porphyry attacks Christian beliefs and denies their credibility on the basis of ample evidence. There is, however, far more to Porphyry's polemics than the *Contra Christianos*. With this in mind, after some general remarks on Porphyry's involvement in networking, rivalry, and polemics, I should like to focus on two case studies and to show

that the exegetical strategies used by Porphyry in his polemics are decidedly Platonic ones. My thesis is that we may also class other writings of Porphyry, such as Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, amongst his polemics against the Christians.

1. *Polemics and Rivalry*

Born in AD 234 in Phoenician Tyre, Porphyry began his academic studies in Tyre and probably Caesarea. He then studied for about 10 years in Athens with the Platonist and literary critic Longinus, and, following that, spent at least six years in the school of Plotinus at Rome. In AD 268 he left Rome and went off to Lilybaeum in Sicily for at least a few years until he returned (very probably) to Rome again.[1] Through his teachers Longinus and Plotinus, Porphyry established many contacts in Asia Minor, Greece, Rome and Sicily and thus built a far-reaching Platonic network, one which harboured a great diversity of philosophical opinions (for instance, we know something about Porphyry's differences with the Platonist Iamblichus concerning religious practices/theurgy via his Πρὸς Ἀνεβόντα ἐπιστολή, *Letter to Anebo*). During Porphyry's lifetime, the potential for polemical confrontations with living representatives of other philosophical αἱρέσεις seems to have been largely exhausted: Longinus, Porphyry's teacher in Athens, was still critically engaged in controversial discussions with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers and their views (against the Stoic Medius on theories of the soul and against Epicureans and their contingent cosmology in his *Timaeus* commentary).[2] Plotinus, on the other hand, Porphyry's second formative philosophical teacher and mentor, argues against the Stoics, as it were, only theoretically, and above all critically examines the teachings of Aristotle. Yet he takes a polemical stance against contemporary (Christian) Gnostics in Rome (see e.g., his Πρὸς τοὺς Γνωστικούς, *Enneads* [*Enn.*] II 9 [33]).[3] Porphyry also takes a critical look at

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[1] For biographical details, mainly based on his own information given in the *Vita Plotini*, see Goulet 2012, p. 1291–98. For a very clear sketch see Becker 2016, p. 3–15.

[2] Further details see Männlein-Robert 2001, esp. p. 614–49 and 437–48.

[3] But cf. also *Enn.* III 8 (30); V 8 (31); V 5 (32), see, e.g., Turner 2014, p. 52–76; Becker 2016, p. 36, n. 195; Soares Santoprete 2016, p. 109–63.

a Stoic, Boethus, whose doctrine of the soul he argues against (Πρὸς Βόηθον, 5 books), but we do not know whether this was an academic or a personal confrontation.[4] In terms of living opponents, Porphyry on the one hand confronts his somewhat younger colleague Iamblichus on the presence or absence of the divine in statues or images, a confrontation that is part of their larger controversy on theurgy.[5] On the other hand—and this is my focus—Porphyry argues polemically against 'Christianity', i.e. the Christians, their writings and their main representatives, who attacked traditional Hellenism and Greek religion. By 'Christianity' I refer here to the commonalities of the different forms of Christianity with which Porphyry is essentially concerned (which is of course not to deny the pluralism of Early Christianity with all its different local manifestations).[6]

In Porphyry's time the outcome of the conflicts between Hellenes and Christians was uncertain. Tensions had been intensified by the general persecutions of Christians under the Emperors Decius (249–51) and Valerian (253–60) and by the emergence of Apologetic literature and the rapid spread of the new religion. The Platonist Porphyry belongs to the first generation of Hellenic intellectuals to see in the rise of Christianity, its doctrine, and its representatives a considerable threat to their own (pagan) way of life and worldview. He therefore reacted against it as intellectuals do: by taking up the pen. About 100 years before Porphyry, the Platonist Celsus had already criticised the rejection and even refusal of traditional sacrifices and rituals by the Christians, yet he regarded the Christians as merely a fringe group. Porphyry's perception and assessment of them in the late third century AD is quite different:[7] he is keenly aware of contemporary Christian

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[4] See Goulet 2012, p. 1301 (fragments conserved in Eus., *PE* 11.27–28, 14.10, 15.10–11 and 15.15 Mras). On the (very likely) Stoic philosopher Boethus see Alesse 1997, p. 359–83.

[5] For this controversy as a background for Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, see Viltanioti 2017a and Männlein-Robert 2017b, p. 202–04. For Porphyry's rivalry against Iamblichus in terms of treating philosophical leading figures as 'living icons' (Pythagoras respectively Plotinus) see Edwards 1993, p. 159–72; Männlein-Robert 2016, p. 197–220.

[6] Here with Becker 2016, p. 70 with n. 372; cf. Leppin 2012, p. 249–52.

[7] Cf. Celsus apud Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.62 Bader. For Celsus' criticism of the Christians see Andresen 1955; Pichler 1980; Watson 1992.

communities, which had gradually established themselves in the ancient local structures. In addition, since the time of Celsus, Christians had become a serious religious community, one which was in the course of expanding into the higher strata of society.[8] Many of Porphyry's writings on religious philosophy can, in my opinion, be associated with his almost 'seismographic' early recognition of the dangerous potential of the social, political, and religious transformation of the ancient world instigated by the rise of the Christian religion.[9] Even if not all of these texts are 'explicitly' anti-Christian or unmistakably polemical, he apparently felt the need to write them and thus make clear that some long-accepted views and practices of the Hellenes and their old religion were now in need of explanation. Thus, in a social environment that was in the course of undergoing considerable change, Porphyry emphatically and argumentatively explained and defended his own—Hellenic, Platonic—point of view on some issues that had obviously become problematic in contemporary terms. With this is mind, we may classify at least some of his writings on the philosophy of religion as polemics, in the broadest sense of the term.

2. *What Are 'Polemics'?*

By 'polemics' I mean, on the one hand, the linguistic expression of the perception of a threat and, on the other hand, a linguistic coping mechanism with which someone takes action against a perceived threat.[10] Written polemics include not only the tendentious colouring of various types of text, but also (according to Ursula Paintner) a certain 'Schreibweise bzw. einen Schreibgestus' ('way of writing or a writing gesture').[11] For ancient literature, and thus also for Porphyry, we can identify the rhetorical strategies employed in polemical texts. The rhetorical shaping of the theses and arguments marks the intensity and the strategy of the debate.

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[8] For details see Becker 2016, p. 51 with further literature.

[9] See Männlein-Robert 2017a, p. 176.

[10] For such quiet but effective modes of polemics, see Becker 2017, esp. p. 113–16.

[11] Paintner 2011, p. 43; on the use of polemic 'im gesamten Formenschatz [...] literarischer Gattungen' ('in the entire formal wealth [...] of literary genres') see Lecke 1972, p. 61–62 (quotation p. 61); cf. Scheichl 2003, p. 117.

It is an indicator of the emotional intensity of the situation. In addition, there are of course also arguments and argumentative structures that must be regarded as polemical in a certain context. In the case of written polemics such as those of Porphyry, who is well trained both philosophically and rhetorically, I think we can speak of specifically applied textual strategies. The 'subjectivity' of polemics, a claim often made in the older literature,[12] or their supposed personal character, has not gone unchallenged in more recent research. Under the heading of 'polemics' we may now also include texts grounded solely in facts and rational arguments as well as those with a personal, affective colouring (thus distinguishing between 'invective' and 'polemics'). Polemics do not aim at a consensus reached by argumentation or at the correction of an opponent. Rather, the opponent becomes the enemy and certain stereotypes are used which stigmatise, discredit, weaken, and damage the 'enemy', thus branding them as uneducated, unintelligent, or just plain beastly.[13] In any case, we can see a considerable commitment on the part of the author: polemics often arise from a situation where there is a perceived danger, crisis or threat. Such is the case with Porphyry. His rationally argued and factually supported criticisms of Christianity, of leading Christian figures, and of Christian holy texts must be understood as a strategic mode of threat communication: that is, his literary communication—his writings—has an identifiable cause, namely the perceived threat posed by the Christians.[14]

2.1. Explicit Polemics

In what follows, the main focus will be less on the concept of the enemy and more on what I believe to be a central polemical strategy of Porphyry, namely his exegetical technique. What distinguishes

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[12] See, e.g., Stenzel 1986.

[13] Becker 2017, p. 114; on the construction and functioning of the concept of the enemy and related psychological and rhetorical stereotypes, see Männlein-Robert 2014, p. 117–38.

[14] The term 'threat communication' was coined by the German sociologist Werner Schirmer (Schirmer 2008), who thus provides the conceptual instruments for the analysis of communication behaviour in situations and constellations of threat. For more information on Schirmer's concept and threat communication, see Becker 2016, p. 32–41.

Porphyry above all is not only his profound scholarship and erudition, but also the particular intellectual elegance of his intervention, both implicit as well as explicit, in his polemical debate with the Christians. I believe it is precisely with regard to his decidedly 'Platonic' method of exegesis that he reveals a subtle strategy in his critique of dangerous contemporary—Christian—movements, tendencies, and discourses. In this context I should like to add a further distinction to the above-mentioned facets of polemics: we will have occasion to identify not only 'explicit' but also 'implicit' forms of rivalry and polemics in various writings of Porphyry, as they include a broad set of stylistic-rhetorical, dogmatic, and exegetical strategies that can be understood as 'polemic'.

The 'explicit' form of polemics is well known: the most prominent example is certainly Porphyry's text *Contra Christianos* / Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν, which has come down to us in fragments. The title itself (presumably original, transmitted by the *Suda* π 2098 = Porph. fr. 2.19T Smith), with κατά, reveals the issue as well as the polemical style of this writing.[15] The opponent is explicitly mentioned as a group in the title. Moreover, the sheer size of this work, 15 books, is testament to Porphyry's investment in his confrontation with Christianity. It also shows the degree to which Porphyry took this religion to be a real threat. Apart from Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν, Christians and Jesus are also mentioned and sharply attacked in his writing *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* / Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας (fr. 343F; 345.8–17F Smith).[16] We also know that Porphyry, together with his colleague Amelius, had been assigned by Plotinus with writing refutations of the (Christian) Gnostics Adelphius and Aquilinus and their disciples (*Plot.* 16).[17] This shows not only that in the Roman school of Plotinus there were personal contacts with Gnostics and a solid knowledge of their teachings, but also makes clear to what extent the Platonists perceived these Christian Gnostics as a danger. Amelius wrote 40 books Πρὸς τὸ Ζωστριανοῦ / *Against the Book of Zostrianus* and Porphyry himself wrote 'many confutations' of this same

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[15] See Becker 2016, p. 15, n. 84 with further literature.

[16] See Becker 2016, p. 7.

[17] For the Gnostics Adelphius and Aquilinus mentioned in the *Vita Plotini* 16 see Brisson 1982, p. 61–62 and 76–77 (with further literature).

book (συγχνοὺς πεποίημαι ἐλέγχους, *Plot.* 16.14–18).[18] These are all examples of what we can call 'explicit' polemics.

2.2. Implicit Polemics

With regard to 'implicit' polemics the issue becomes more complicated, and more interesting. How do we recognise implicit polemics, for example, when the title of the work is not clearly formulated and no names of opponents or prominent representatives of the opposing side are mentioned? Methodologically, I see the following possibilities for identifying implicit polemics.

On the one hand, we can draw the conclusion that certain concepts, formulations, dogmata, figures of thought or patterns of argumentation, which are particularly conspicuous in a Porphyrean text or are advocated or criticised with a particular zeal, play a role in the polemical context. These formulations and arguments are not casual or coincidental but have been carefully chosen and inserted by the author. This, however, can be reconciled with, and distinguished from other writings and doctrines of Porphyry that have been handed down. We must pay attention to certain loaded formulations or 'code words', which are used by other authors and texts to implicitly criticise the Christians. For example, in his *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* Porphyry distinguishes οἱ Ἕλληνες from οἱ κρατοῦντες (fr. 324.6F Smith). This latter term is in fact a dog whistle for the Christians.[19] It is not unusual for Christians to be referred to through such disparaging terms as 'dolts' or 'the uneducated' (ἀμαθεστάτοι, ἀνόητοι). Furthermore, we can also speak of 'implicit' polemics when Porphyry refutes 'arguments' that are clearly of Christian provenance (examples of which will be provided below). A further indication of implicit polemics is that rivalry and polemics can also be seen in Porphyry's choice of certain topics at certain times. Based on the chosen 'theme' of a text, together with its argumentative structure and rhetoric, we may argue that a passage or a phrase has been used for polemical reasons. Such a use is, of course, only possible against a particular cultural, intellectual or even religious

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[18] For Amelius, who wrote 40 books against Zostrianus, see Brisson 1987, p. 824; for Porphyry's refutation see Goulet 2012, p. 1304 (no. 28).

[19] See Becker 2016, p. 7.

background. Porphyry's discussion of the philosophical value of
oracles (*De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*) or his explanation
of the meaning of statues of gods (Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων) may be good
examples of this. Oracles and statues of gods, as well as sacrifices
of all kinds, have indeed been established forms of pagan religious
identity in the Imperium Romanum in the West and the East for
many centuries and played a vital role in local ritual cultures. Yet,
during Porphyry's lifetime they apparently lost their self-evidence
due to the chronic and violent Christian attacks against these
modes of Hellenic religiosity, to such an extent that they were in
need of explanation. The Christians' claim of authority, as well as
their claim to an exclusive path to salvation, made that the wor-
ship of (numerous) other gods in cult rituals became regarded as
an aberration. Accordingly, polytheism as well as oracles and stat-
ues of gods were uncompromisingly rejected by Christians and
branded as demon and idol worship or as manifestations of god-
lessness.[20] Hence by choosing such controversial and problematic
topics as oracles or statues of gods, which had been under discus-
sion for some time, and by finding clear philosophical arguments
and theological statements 'for' oracles and 'for' images of gods,
Porphyry made his own position within the contemporary reli-
gious discourse clear. We can therefore identify and evaluate his
statements and positioning in these debates as cases of 'implicit'
polemics.

2.3. Context and Transmission as Indicator of Polemics

Implicit polemics can, in my opinion, be detected by studying the
'contexts' in which Porphyry's texts were transmitted and cited.
What is particular about Porphyry's writings (or fragments) is
indeed that they are largely preserved by his 'rivals', i.e. by Chris-
tian authors who quote him or epitomise his texts in order to
disprove him or polemicise against him. It is precisely because
of this irony of history that his Christian opponents themselves
have passed on his texts and arguments (at least partly). In the
case of *Contra Christianos*, we know of several refutations by

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[20] For rich evidence, for instance in Origen's refutation of the Platonist
Celsus, see in Becker 2016, p. 58–59; in general, for the apologists' problem with
pagan polytheism see Lanzillotta 2010.

well-known Christian intellectuals and Church Fathers, first and foremost by Eusebius of Caesarea (in his lost *Contra Porphyrium*), Methodius from Olympus (lost as well) and Apollinaris from Laodicea (again, lost).[21] In the case of Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων / *De statuis*, we must include in our interpretation the fact that Eusebius preserved parts of this writing in his *Praeparatio Euangelica* [*PE*].[22] But above all, we must take into account Eusebius' decidedly polemic introductions, transitions, and conclusions to the passages from Porphyry or the summaries thereof. With his *Praeparatio Euangelica*, Eusebius tries to convince educated circles of the intellectual soundness of Christianity and its theology. The fact *that* he quotes from and polemically comments on texts of Porphyry more than 100 times[23] reminds us how dangerous the arguments of Porphyry, a prominent Platonist, must have appeared to a Christian audience. With regard to Eusebius' polemical citation of and commentary on Porphyry's *On Statues* (especially *PE* 3.6.7–14), the considerable difference between the Early Christian and Porphyrean understanding of God and the image becomes clear once again.[24] Moreover, Eusebius is also said to have written (according to Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 81) a work of 25 books *Against Porphyry*, and he was not the only one polemicising extensively against this 'dangerous' Platonist.[25] Eusebius' reaction to Porphyry is both polemical and personal, and he

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[21] For more details and for a list of all Christian authors who quoted from Porphyry's *Contra Christianos* or knew of this text, see Becker 2016, p. 17–20.

[22] There are a few fragments and testimonies from this text transmitted by other authors, like Stobaeus (fr. 354aF and fr. 360aF Smith), Iohannes Lydus (fr. 357F Smith) and Augustine (fr. 358aF Smith), but the majority of them come from Eusebius' *Praeparatio Euangelica*.

[23] See Sirinelli & des Places 1974, p. 28–31.

[24] Still relevant are, e.g., Geffcken 1919 and Elliger 1930; now also Meier 2003, esp. p. 538–53.

[25] This, however, like similar writings, is not preserved. Also, Methodius of Olympus (AD 311/12) wrote an *Aduersus Porphyrium* (not transmitted, but mentioned by Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 83), during Porphyry's lifetime; Apollinaris of Laodicea as well (according to Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 104): these three are probably the first of the Christian refutations of Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*, which (probably written in the first decade of the fourth century, at the time of the Great Persecution) was well-known and therefore threatening for contemporary Christians. For what may perhaps also be polemical passages against Porphyry, see the fragments by Macarius Magnes, who, based his *Apocriticus*, views of an anonymous pagan philosopher, who had in many respects similarities with

tries to undermine Porphyry's arguments and methods, as well as his credibility as a Platonist and philosopher of religion.[26] This indicates that Porphyry's original text, its subject, its arguments and figures of thought, as well as its method (allegory), must have had a considerable effect on his (Christian) contemporaries. Porphyry's writing Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων apparently also had such impact and reach that the bishop Eusebius felt compelled to refute it as well as its author. The 'context' of quotation and the transmission of an implicitly polemical text must therefore *also* be included in the interpretative evaluation and can be read as an indication of the perceived polemic tendency of a quoted or epitomised text.

3. *Case Study 1. Explicit Polemics in Porphyry's* Contra Christianos

In what follows, I should like to shed some light on the exegetical strategies of Porphyry that can be polemically interpreted, by means of two case studies. We will first take a brief look at the text Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν, which we may use as an example of explicit polemics. Apart from the explicit naming of the opposing group, the Christians, in the title, as well as the indication of a polemical intention by the preposition 'κατά', the exegetical strategies applied by Porphyry in the preserved and undoubted fragments of this text also show a clear polemical character. Porphyry expresses a fundamental criticism of the biblical writings, historicising the sacred texts of the Christians. The best-known example is certainly his informed late dating of the book Daniel of the Septuagint, which was carried out with a knowledge of a wide variety of sources.[27] According to Porphyry, the book is not a Hebrew production of the sixth century BC, as the Christians claim, but rather Greek work of the second century BC, at the time of

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Porphyry; for the ongoing discussion on the relation between Porphyry's texts and Macarius' polemics against him see Viltanioti 2017a and Volp 2017.

[26] See Magny 2014, p. 35–53; 2017; Johnson 2014.

[27] Porphyry, *Chr.* fr. 13T Becker = Jerome, *In Danielem* prol. l.1–32; Porphyry, *Chr.* fr. 14T Becker = Jerome, *in Danielem* prol. l.45–66; Porphyry, *Chr.* fr. 19T Becker = Jerome, *In Danielem* 3.98; see further Porphyry, *Chr.* fr. 17T Becker = Jerome, *In Danielem* 2.46 and Porphyry, *Chr.* fr. 20T Becker = Jerome, *In Danielem* 5.10a.

Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The prophecies contained in the book Daniel, which were considered authoritative until then because of their supposed great age, are thus proved by Porphyry to be a *uaticinium ex euentu* and the whole of the prophetical writings to be a fairly recent work masquerading as something far older.[28] In fact, by radically historicising not only the Christian holy texts but the religion as a whole, Porphyry undermines the Christian claim to an exclusive path to salvation (the central question here is why Christ—historically—came so late?). Moreover, old testament figures (such as Daniel), and leading Christian figures such as the apostles Peter and Paul are discredited and their authority is undermined by disputes about doctrines and problematic texts (Porphyry, *Chr.* fr. 1T Becker (= fr. 21a Harnack) = Jerome, *In Galatas* Praef. l. 74–99):

> *quod nequaquam intellegens* [...] *sceleratus ille Porphyrius in primo operis sui aduersum nos libro Petrum a Paulo obicit esse reprehensum quod non recto pede incederet ad euangelizandum, uolens et illi maculam erroris inurere et huic procacitatis et in commune ficti dogmatis accusare mendacium, dum inter se ecclesiarum principes discrepent.*

> Since that wicked Porphyry completely misunderstands this, in the first book of his work directed against us he reproaches Peter for having been rebuked by Paul for not having walked straight along to proclaim the gospel. He was driven by the will to brand one with the stain of error, the other with the stain of pushiness, and to denounce the lie of a fictional doctrine intended for the public, since the church principals were not in agreement among themselves.

Figures like these, as well as his Christian contemporaries, are discredited by Porphyry, who paints them as sophists of dubious merit.[29] In particular, Porphyry denies the claim of the Christian exegete Origen (who was himself well versed in Platonism) to the effect that he correctly applied allegory in the interpretation of Christian texts, as Porphyry maintains that allegory can only be used as an exclusively 'pagan' method of textual interpretation.[30]

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[28] For more details, see Becker 2016, p. 71–76 and 83–84.

[29] See Becker 2018.

[30] See Becker 2016, p. 75–76; Pollmann 2017, esp. p. 94–107.

Porphyry thus shows contradictions, inconsistencies, factual errors and inappropriate methods in the Christian texts, which leads him to dismiss both their content and their literary quality. His deeply philological critique thus systematically disproves the Christian claim of divine inspiration and thus of the divine character of these writings (they are not 'holy').[31] We can therefore see a conscious, targeted, and ideologically motivated deconstruction of a text that Christians regard as sacred.[32] Porphyry uses his philological abilities to polemically refute and desacralise everything that was holy and important to Christians, including their holy texts, their holy figures, and their allegorical readings.

4. *Case Study 2. Implicit Polemics in Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*

A text such as Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων may be used as an example of implicit polemics in the context of contemporary Christian discussions about the relevance of pagan religious practices, especially sacrifices, the consulting oracles and the adoration of images and statues of the gods. Porphyry apparently preferred to answer the iconoclasm of contemporary Christians with criticism and polemics, which allowed him to explain these pagan practices as fundamentally justified and philosophically full of meaning and—as a seeming side note—to attack the ignorant Christians.[33] For a better understanding of the relevance of the subject of this Porphyrean text, I will first give a very short outline of its cultural, philosophical, and religious background.

4.1. The Background

Greek gods and cult images had always been part of Greek culture and had always been an integral part of the Greek religion and its cults. The most famous works of art of Antiquity were statues of the gods, or more precisely, cult statues.[34] Phidias' famous

[31] See Becker 2016, p. 72–73.
[32] See Becker 2016, p. 119.
[33] See also Männlein-Robert 2017b.
[34] For the ancient cults on statues and images of gods, see Gladigow 1985–1986.

monumental statue of Zeus at Olympia or the Colossus of Rhodes, the god Helios, were even among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient world. Unlike in the ancient Jewish synagogue, or as in early Christian churches, where as a rule no cult statues could be found, statues of the gods in human form played an important role in religious practice in Greco-Roman Antiquity.[35] Images of the gods, especially statues, were often made of precious materials, which is why they were attributed a special potency: the material value of the statue of a god was thought to reflect not only its meaning, but also its potency. As in Homeric poetry, the Greek statues of the gods were almost always anthropomorphic. According to ancient testimonies (e.g., Strabo 8.3.30 and Valerius Maximus 3.7) we may even assume a close interaction between Homeric poetry, popular religion, and the fine arts. The famous sculptor Phidias is said to have designed his chryselephantine statue of Zeus, which was placed in the central temple at Olympia, based on a scene from Homer's *Iliad*. The statues of the gods are generally regarded by the Greeks as representations of the respective gods, but at the same time, the deity was believed to be present in its statue (permanent or temporary) and therefore the images of the gods are treated accordingly: statues of the gods were washed and dressed, anointed and perfumed, they were carried around and fed, they were told the time of day. There are many narratives and legends about animated, miraculous, moving, talking, crying, sweating statues as a sign of political unrest up to imperial times and Late Antiquity.[36]

4.2. The Tradition of Criticism of Images of the Gods

It is well known that the old philosophers, since Heraclitus, Xenophanes and, above all, since Plato, decisively rejected the old Homeric polytheism and its morally deficient gods. They did not postulate an anthropomorphic or even physical god but rather

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[35] See Markschies 2016.

[36] See Scheer 2000, p. 54–66; Icard-Gianolio 2004a and 2004b. See also Markschies 2016, p. 127; cf. also Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.17.1: *simulacra spirantia*; Cicero, *De diuinatione* 2.58; Ioannes Lydus, *De ostentis prooemium* 8.3–5 Wachsmuth). Especially for the political implications with cult statues of ancient gods see Bremmer 2013, esp. p. 14–16.

a non-physical, transcendent God. They were against the religious practice of worshipping images and statues of the gods, which was customary in popular piety throughout Antiquity, and argued that a god cannot be thought to be present in a material image or statue.[37] This criticism can also be found in Plutarch and we can assume that this philosophical criticism inevitably leads to the demythologisation of the statues of the gods, which are considered to be only supposedly animate while in fact being inanimate matter.[38] According to the sophist and Platonist Maximus of Tyre, statues of gods may only serve as religious aids for non-philosophers.[39] In the last half of the third century AD, in which Porphyry writes, contemporary Christian intellectuals, apologists and early Church Fathers integrated these arguments from the philosophical tradition of the older Hellenic criticism of religion and established their own tradition of rejecting pagan images of the gods (as superstition): this was the case e.g., in Aristides (*Apology*), Athenagoras (*Legatio*), the *Letter of Barnabas*, *Letter to Diognetus*, Justin Martyr, Tatian (*Oratio contra gentiles*), Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus*), Origen (*Contra Celsum*), Minucius Felix (*Octavius*), and Tertullian (*De idolatria*).[40] The Early Christians therefore essentially did *not* worship their God in images or statues, at least in pre-Constantinian times. In addition, they made/drew upon their 'own' literary tradition, the Old Testament, where the Jewish criticism of the idols of the neighbouring peoples of Israel is expressed, e.g., in the prohibition on images

[37] Cf. Heraclitus, fr. 5 (Diels & Kranz I, p. 151.15–152.2), where he says that gods are not dwelling in statues (this is quoted in Celsus, see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.62.9–11 Bader); Xenophanes, fr. 14 (Diels & Kranz I, p. 132.15–17); fr. 15 (p. 132.18–133.4); fr. 16 (p. 133.5–7); fr. 23 (p. 135.2–5), where he claims anthropomorphism of the gods as wrong and naive; see also Plato, *Respublica* II 377d4–383c7: Homeric gods don't possess ethic value, they do not perform as models. Plato's Socrates therefore constructs a (philosophically correct) model of a typology of the Good and the immutable God and postulates θεολογία instead of μυθολογία, together with an immaterial and incorporeal god; see Männlein-Robert 2010, esp. p. 137–38.

[38] Cf. Plutarch, *Coriolanus* 38.1–3; see Hirsch-Luipold 2002, p. 171 (*ad* Plutarch, *De tranquillitate animi* 20.477c–d).

[39] Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertation* 2 (εἰ θεοῖς ἀγάλματα ἰδρυτέον) and also *Dissertation* 11 (τίς ὁ θεὸς κατὰ Πλάτωνα), see Funke 1981, p. 666–67; Fazzo 1977, p. 137–50.

[40] See Funke 1981, p. 773–75 and Stock 2007; Lanzillotta 2010, p. 448–63; Männlein-Robert 2017b, p. 178.

of the second commandment (Ex. 20.3–5). Attacks of this sort can, of course, be found in many parts of the Old Testament,[41] as well as later in Paul.[42] This Hellenistic Jewish tradition of criticism[43] can also be seen in the apologists's terminology: they use the term 'εἴδωλον', which goes back to the LXX translation for Hellenic cult statues (LXX IV Reg. 21.21) and is a negative expression to emphasise the illusory character of these images (εἴδωλον as a sort of 'phantom'), which became a synonym for sin.[44] The pagans, on the other side, had more terms—either semantically positive or neutral—to describe their images and statues of gods (e.g., ἄγαλμα, βρέτας, εἰκών, ξόανον, ἀνδριάς).[45]

The main arguments formulated by Christian apologists (based on Jewish-Hellenistic guidelines and Greek philosophical arguments) against cult statues can be summarised as follows:

a) The 'anthropomorphism' of the images of gods
b) Images of gods are pure, transient, arbitrary 'matter' and thus opposed to the immaterial, transcendent God. A statue is dead matter.
c) Images/statues of gods are made by 'human' hands and are therefore 'artistic' products. The artists may lead a sloppy, immoral, and lecherous 'lifestyle', and therefore their artefacts are problematic.
d) The possible efficacy of images of the gods is due to the work of evil 'demons'; therefore, images of gods are not only theologically wrong, but also 'dangerous'.

In light of this background, we can understand to what extent the Platonist Porphyry, around the last decades of the third century, must have felt threatened by this Christian criticism and their polemics against the old Hellenic gods and their statues. In his explicit and implicit polemical texts, he therefore reacted to a con-

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[41] See, e.g., Deut. 4.28; Is. 44.9–20; Ier. 10.1–16; Ps. 115.4–8 and 135.15–18.
[42] See Act. 19.21–40. For more details see Stock 2007, p. 125–26.
[43] See in greater detail and with rich references Lanzillotta 2010, p. 444–48.
[44] For the term εἴδωλον see, e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 5.451; *Odyssey* 4.796; for εἴδωλον as a sort of ghost see Homer, *Odyssey* 11.476. See Funke 1981, p. 798–800; Baynes 1955.
[45] Bremmer 2015, p. 140–41 and 2013, p. 7–8.

temporary critique of images by the Christians, which feeds on the traditions mentioned above. He must have taken this as motivation for certain parts of his Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν and especially for his Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, which certainly did not come out of the blue.

4.3. Porphyry, Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων

Most fragments of Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων (351–360aF Smith) are handed down by the Church Father Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Praeparatio Euangelica* (isolated fragments are also preserved by Iohannes Lydus, Stobaeus, and Augustine).[46] As far as we can reconstruct, the treatise started with a *prooimion* (fr. 351F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.6.7–7.1 Mras) and after that, a kind of catalogue or gallery[47] of statues of important old Greek gods and goddesses, their iconographic representation and their attributes, as well as, towards the end, of some Egyptian deities. This gallery is structured in a hierarchy: Porphyry opens with the statue of the highest god Zeus and leads the reader via Hera, Hestia, Demeter, Dionysus, Pluto, Attis/Adonis to Artemis and Athena and finally, after numerous other Hellenic deities, to Egyptian deities like Kneph and Isis/Osiris (also Helios and Selene)—just to name a selection of the many deities and statues mentioned.

4.3.1. The *Prooimion*. The Setting of Hellenic Codes

The first sentence in the *prooimion* is highly significant:

> φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ’ ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι, σοφίας θεολόγου νοήματα δεικνύς, οἷς τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις διὰ εἰκόνων συμφύλων αἰσθήσει ἐμήνυσαν ἄνδρες, τὰ ἀφανῆ φανεροῖς ἀποτυπώσαντες πλάσμασι, τοῖς καθάπερ ἐκ βίβλων τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἀναλέγειν τὰ περὶ θεῶν μεμαθηκόσι γράμματα. θαυμαστὸν δὲ οὐδὲν ξύλα καὶ λίθους ἡγεῖσθαι τὰ ξόανα τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους, καθὰ δὴ καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων οἱ ἀνόητοι λίθους μὲν ὁρῶσι τὰς στήλας, ξύλα δὲ τὰς δέλτους, ἐξυφασμένην δὲ πάπυρον τὰς βίβλους (fr. 351F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.7.1 Mras).

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[46] Porphyry, fr. 357F Smith = Iohannes Lydus, *De mensibus* 138.18–139.5; Porphyry, fr. 354aF Smith = Stobaeus 1.31.7–10 and Porphyry, fr. 360a F Smith = Stobaeus 1.25.2; Porph. (?), fr. 358a F Smith = Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* 7.25.1–12.

[47] So with Bidez 1913, p. 21: 'galerie d'images' and des Places 1976, p. 17.

> To whom it is right I will speak; close the gates, you who are uninitiated!
>
> I am showing the thoughts of a theological wisdom, with which men revealed God and the powers of God to physical perception through kindred images, delineating invisible things in visible forms, to those who have learned to pick out the outlines of the gods from the images as if from books. It is not surprising that the most uneducated consider the statues to be wood and stones, just as indeed those ignorant of letters see inscribed columns as mere stones, writing tablets as pieces of wood, and books as woven papyrus (trans. A. Johnson).[48]

Here Porphyry quotes a well-known hexametric verse of Orphic origin (fr. 245 Kern): φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι. The speaker who quotes this verse habitually assumes the role of 'Orpheus' or that of a priest who describes what is proclaimed below as divine revelation. However, this should not be accessible to the uninitiated (βέβηλοι) and only to the initiated (gesture of secrecy). This verse is an exclusivity or exclusion formula anchored in ritual and established in religious literature, the oldest proof of which is currently given to us in the Derveni-Papyrus (col. 7), but which is mainly handed down in imperial and Late Antique texts.[49] This old Orphic formula thus underpins the legitimacy of the following statements. The speaker, here probably the author Porphyry, appears to be performing the priestly gesture of the pointing (cf. δεικνύς) and thus becomes recognisable as a hierophant of ancient mystical knowledge of revelation modeled on the Orphic tradition (cf. fr. 351.17F Smith: ἐμήνυσαν).[50] By presenting it as a kind of revelation, Porphyry wants to exlude a

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[48] Johnson 2013, p. 165.

[49] See Eus., *PE* 13.12.3–5 Mras for Aristobulus (= fr. 247 Kern); cf. Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 8, p. 9.13 Schwartz or Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 7.74.4; more examples in Riedweg 1993, p. 47–48 with note 118; rich references gives Mino Gabriele in Gabriele & Maltomini 2014, p. 109–10.

[50] We know from an autobiographical episode of his *Vita Plotini* that Porphyry really does like to slip into this role: there he reports how he was once personally and explicitly honoured by his master Plotinus as a 'poet, philosopher and priest at the same time' (Porphyry, *Plot.* 15.4–6: ἔδειξας ὁμοῦ καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ τὸν φιλόσοφον καὶ τὸν ἱεροφάντην). In his *On Statues of Gods* his religious, hierophantic pointing gesture converges with that of the divinely inspired, revealing exegete: for this text is the written interpretation or exegesis of statues of the gods, see Männlein-Robert 2017b, p. 183–85; cf. Krulak 2011, p. 343–64.

certain group of 'non-believers' from his literary exegesis of statues. Since the Orphic formula is supposed to mark the doctrines that he is about to expound as—pagan, Hellenic—religious and secret knowledge, this can be read as a programmatic statement of exclusion: as we have seen above, it were mainly the Christians who were increasingly attacking the old Hellenic gods and their cults, in which their statues play an important role. Therefore, we can conclude, with quite good arguments, that the anti-Christian tendency of this text can already be identified in the *prooimion*. Here, and also in the following, Porphyry's refutation or argumentation against three Christian points, difficult aspects of criticism are recognisable:

First (cf. fr. 351–352F Smith), Porphyry strongly opposes the accusation that the Hellenes see the gods 'themselves' in their statues. He interprets the statues of the gods not as forms of presence but as 'forms of the invisible in the visible' (fr. 351.17–18F Smith): τὰ ἀφανῆ φανεροῖς (ἀποτυπώσαντες) πλάσμασιν, that is: statues are to be seen as revelations—or more precisely, as 'signs'— of the divine. Already in the *prooimium* Porphyry programmatically draws an analogy between a text or book (fr. 351.19F Smith: γράμματα) and a statue.[51] He applies an important theoretical reflection on signs and media to the interpretation of statues of gods. Just as a book or a text is read as a conglomerate of signs with meaning, a statue of the gods must also be 'read' and interpreted as consisting of signs with meaning. Just as the matter of the book/ text is considered to be a sensually perceptible medium whose content can only be grasped spiritually, so the material statues of the old gods represent 'symbolic media' accessible to αἴσθησις, but pointing 'beyond' the sensual world and referring to divine forces of action. Central to this is the 'decoding' of the characters or the reading out of what they refer to. These signs must, of course, be (correctly) interpreted, and—Porphyry says this literally—only for the uneducated and fools they appear as material and thus ungodly (cf. fr. 351.21–22F Smith: τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους; οἱ ἀνόητοι).[52] On the one hand, Porphyry cleverly defuses the argument of idolatry launched by the Christians, according to which

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[51] See Johnson 2013, p. 167.
[52] Cf. Graf 2005, p. 261.

the Hellenes assumed the 'presence' of their gods in their pictures. He 'divinises' the images—but the gods themselves are *not* present in the images[53]—and places them on the level of signs with reference character. What he brings about is not really a desacralisation or pure aestheticism. One should rather call it a case of 'functionalising': the material statues refer to an immaterial, transcendent divinity; they are coded and therefore are to be decoded as revelations of the divine. We clearly see that Porphyry puts those who cannot 'read' the old statues of the gods on the same level as illiterate people who do not understand characters. This is a polemical blow against (Christian) critics.[54]

4.3.2. Materiality and Its Meaning

The second argument, closely interwoven with the first, is that of the 'materiality' of the statues of gods: Porphyry clearly opposes the standard accusation of Christians that the pagan statues of gods are made of matter (wood, gold, ivory, etc.), which, however, cannot serve as the home of a god.[55] In the following, Porphyry, however, emphatically defends the material nature and form of the pagan statues of the gods and explains their meaning and semantic reference:

> φωτοειδοῦς δὲ ὄντος τοῦ θείου καὶ ἐν πυρὸς αἰθερίου περιχύσει διάγοντος ἀφανοῦς τε τυγχάνοντος αἰσθήσει περὶ θνητὸν βίον ἀσχόλῳ, διὰ μὲν τῆς διαυγοῦς ὕλης, οἷον κρυστάλλου ἢ Παρίου λίθου ἢ καὶ ἐλέφαντος, εἰς τὴν τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτοῦ ἔννοιαν ἐνῆγον· διὰ δὲ τῆς τοῦ χρυσοῦ, εἰς τὴν τοῦ πυρὸς διανόησιν καὶ τὸ ἀμίαντον αὐτοῦ, ὅτι χρυσὸς οὐ μιαίνεται) (fr. 352F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.7.2 Mras).

> As the deity is of the nature of light, and dwells in an atmosphere of ethereal fire, and is invisible to sense that is busy with mortal life, through translucent matter, such as crystal or Parian marble or even ivory, men are led to the conception of his light, and through material gold to the discernment of the fire, and to its undefiled purity, because gold cannot be defiled (trans. IMR).

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[53] So with Dodds 1970, p. 161.

[54] Against Graf 2005, p. 266, who states 'the absence of any polemics' in this text of Porphyry.

[55] See Graf 2005, p. 265; Finney 1994, p. 47–53.

Reflections of light were used for statues of the gods since the divine was like light and surrounded by subtle fire; yet many had also shown the invisibility of the divine οὐσία in a black stone (i.e. aniconic); man had chosen man because of the rational gift of the divine. Likewise, the beauty (κάλλος) of the anthropomorphic images of the gods refers to the unmixed, pure beauty in divine things. Sphere and spherical form (as attributes of gods) depicted the identical forms of the cosmos, sun and moon, etc.

This shows that Porphyry traces the ancient statues of the gods, both aniconic and iconic, in terms of matter, colour and form, back to something comparable in the realm of the divine. In his 'theological allegories', certain characteristics of the material statues reflect certain characteristics of the divine, more precisely: the respective material qualities of the statues of gods refer to corresponding qualities of the divine itself.[56] According to Porphyry, certain conclusions can be drawn about the gods from the statues. Thus, while the matter and form of a statue have symbolic, more precisely, allegorical value and figuratively refer to the divine, the material side of the statue has an almost natural 'kinship' with the represented god, i.e. with the divine. With this—and this is remarkable—he elevates the material side of the statues of gods.

4.3.3. Human Artists

A third aspect is to be added: in this passage Porphyry chooses 'the people' (ἄνδρες, cf. already fr. 351.17F Smith) at least three times as the active subject of verbal forms (fr. 352.7F Smith: ἐνῆγον, fr. 352.11F Smith: ἀπετύπουν, fr. 352.18F Smith: ἀπένειμαν); but in doing so he reinforces the argument about the materiality of images of gods: for with this, their 'being made' by human hands is emphasised even more clearly—and it was precisely this accusation that Christians often launched. Of course, for Porphyry, the statues of the gods are not 'made gods', but 'made signs' of the divine. This opens up another hermeneutic dimension. For when people, more precisely the human artists and producers of the images of the gods, produce them, as Porphyry says (fr. 352.1–7F Smith), 'using light-reflecting materials, bring about the realisa-

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[56] See also Gabriele & Maltomini 2014, p. 113–14; Miles 2015, p. 88.

tion (ἔννοια) of light itself' (φωτοειδοῦς δὲ ὄντος τοῦ θείου […] διὰ μὲν τῆς διαυγῆς ὕλης […] εἰς τὴν τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτοῦ ἔννοιαν ἐνῆγον), then these artists are in possession of higher, divine knowledge and *are* divinely inspired. In addition, Porphyry, with his apparently positive assessment of the human artist as divinely inspired, recalls the corresponding view of Plotinus (e.g., *Enn.* V 8 (31), 1.38–40, where Plotinus says that Phidias formed his Zeus from a non-sensual, i.e., an intellectual model, see below).

4.3.4. Porphyry's Allegory

It is—in my view—obvious that Porphyry takes up the most important arguments launched by the Christian apologists: the anthropomorphic shape of gods, material gods and the morally bad artists. In addition, I should like to stress two more aspects: almost all of the images and statues of gods treated in this text are anthropomorphic (only some of the Egyptian ones are theriomorphic or hybrids), they are material and possess meaningful attributes. What Porphyry is making out of them is not only an allegory in general, but an allegory in a more specific 'Platonic' sense. In his polemical framing of Porphyry's text (which is quoted and epitomised and surely mutilated) Eusebius accuses the Platonist of arrogance and boastfulness (μείζονι τύφῳ, ἀλαζονείας):

> τοσούτων ἡμῖν ἀποδεδειγμένων εἰς ἔλεγχον τῆς ἀσυστάτου θεολογίας τῆς τε λεγομένης μυθικωτέρας καὶ τῆς ὑψηλοτέρας δὴ καὶ φυσικωτέρας, ἣν οἱ παλαιοὶ Ἕλληνές τε καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι σεμνύνοντες ἀπεδείχθησαν, ὥρα καὶ τῶν νέων τῶν δὴ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπαγγελλομένων ἐπαθρῆσαι τὰ καλλωπίσματα. οἴδε γὰρ τὰ περὶ νοῦ δημιουργοῦ τῶν ὅλων καὶ τὰ περὶ ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν νοερῶν τε καὶ λογικῶν δυνάμεων τοῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα μακροῖς ποθ᾽ ὕστερον χρόνοις ἐφευρημένα καὶ λογισμοῖς ὀρθοῖς ἐπινενοημένα συμπλέξαι τῇ τῶν παλαιῶν θεολογίᾳ πεπειραμένοι μείζονι τύφῳ τὴν περὶ τῶν μύθων ἐπαγγελίαν ἐξῆραν. ἄκουε δ᾽ οὖν καὶ τῆς τούτων φυσιολογίας, μεθ᾽ οἵας ἐξενήνεκται τῷ Πορφυρίῳ ἀλαζονείας· (fr. 351F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.6.7 Mras).

> After we have given so many proofs in confutation of their inconsistent theology, both the more mythical so-called, and that which is forsooth of a higher and more physical kind which the ancient Greeks and Egyptians were shown to magnify, it is time to survey also the refinements of the younger generations who make a profession of philosophy in our

own time: for these have endeavoured to combine the doctrines concerning a creative mind of the universe, and those concerning incorporeal ideas and intelligent rational powers—doctrines invented long ages afterwards by Plato, and thought out with accurate reasonings—with the theology of the ancients, exaggerating with yet greater conceit their promise concerning the legends. Listen then to their enquiry into natural phenomena also, and observe with what boastfulness it has been published by Porphyry (trans. IMR).

Eusebius denounces Porphyry's exegesis as a purely 'physical', a 'Stoic' allegory and therefore disqualifies it as a valid means of reaching into the transcendental realm. For a Platonist this is a serious charge. We must keep in mind that Eusebius was a keen follower of Origen, his theology, and his allegorical method, someone whom Porphyry accused in his Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν of applying the allegorical method incorrectly on inappropriate texts. But Porphyry in his Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων obviously sets himself apart from the physical allegory of the Stoics. For they ultimately postulate material gods or divine powers, while Porphyry very clearly postulates non-material and transcendent divine powers.[57] Although he uses the same method as the Stoics, he starts from a different ontological postulate, a truly Platonic concept. Therefore, Eusebius tries to distort this polemically and to accuse him of inconsistencies.

4.3.5. Platonic Allegoresis. Zeus as Demiurge

Porphyry offers even a 'cosmological' allegory based on Plato's *Timaeus*. This we can see from his discussion of Zeus, from which he sets out:

> ὅρα δὲ τὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφίαν οὑτωσὶ διασκοπούμενος· τὸν γὰρ Δία τὸν νοῦν τοῦ κόσμου ὑπολαμβάνοντες, ὃς τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδημιούργησεν ἔχων τὸν κόσμον, ἐν μὲν ταῖς θεολογίαις ταύτῃ περὶ αὐτοῦ παραδεδώκασιν οἱ τὰ Ὀρφέως εἰπόντες· (fr. 354F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.9.1 Mras)

> Now look at the wisdom of the Greeks and examine it as follows. The authors of the Orphic hymns supposed Zeus to be

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[57] For a more detailed philosophical discussion on corporeal or incorporeal powers or the special Porphyrean concept of δυνάμεις of the deities mentioned here, see Viltanioti 2017b, p. 64–71.

the mind of the world, and that he created all things therein, containing the world in himself. Therefore, in their theological systems they have handed down their opinions concerning him thus: [...] (trans. IMR).

Then he quotes first an Orphic hymn to Zeus, in which this god is described as 'Kosmos'. Zeus is praised as a demiurgic God and intellect but is described with a body and in bodily images: the entire cosmos is identical with the body of Zeus, and is the body of Zeus. His 'Zeus' is an immaterial and transcendent demiurge of the cosmos.

In the ensuing interpretation of the hymn, Porphyry identifies this Orphic, poetic Zeus with an image, a statue of Zeus, which is obviously identical with the famous statue of Zeus by Phidias:

> Ζεὺς οὖν ὁ πᾶς κόσμος, ζῷον ἐκ ζῴων καὶ θεὸς ἐκ θεῶν· Ζεὺς δὲ καθὸ νοῦς, ἀφ' οὗ προφέρει πάντα καὶ δημιουργεῖ τοῖς νοήμασιν. Τῶν δὴ θεολόγων τὰ περὶ θεοῦ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἐξηγησαμένων, εἰκόνα μὲν τοιαύτην δημιουργεῖν οἵαν ὁ λόγος ἐμήνυσεν, οὔθ' οἷόν τε ἦν οὔτ', εἴ τις ἐπενόησεν, τὸ ζωτικὸν καὶ νοερὸν καὶ προνοητικὸν διὰ τῆς σφαίρας ἐδείκνυεν. ἀνθρωπόμορφον δὲ τοῦ Διὸς τὸ δείκηλον πεποιήκασιν, ὅτι νοῦς ἦν καθ' ὃν ἐδημιούργει καὶ λόγοις σπερματικοῖς ἀπετέλει τὰ πάντα· κάθηται δέ, τὸ ἑδραῖον τῆς δυνάμεως αἰνιττόμενος· γυμνὰ δὲ ἔχει τὰ ἄνω, ὅτι φανὸς ἐν τοῖς νοεροῖς καὶ τοῖς οὐρανίοις τοῦ κόσμου μέρεσίν ἐστιν· σκέπεται[58] δὲ αὐτῷ τὰ πρόσθια, ὅτι ἀφανὴς τοῖς κάτω κεκρυμμένοις· ἔχει δὲ τῇ μὲν λαιᾷ τὸ σκῆπτρον, καθ' ὃ μάλιστα τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν τὸ ἡγεμονικώτατόν τε καὶ νοερώτατον ὑποικουρεῖ σπλάγχνον, ἡ καρδία· βασιλεὺς γὰρ τοῦ κόσμου ὁ δημιουργικὸς νοῦς· προτείνει δὲ τῇ δεξιᾷ ἢ ἀετόν, ὅτι κρατεῖ τῶν ἀεροπόρων θεῶν ὡς τῶν μεταρσίων ὀρνέων ὁ ἀετός, ἢ Νίκην, ὅτι νενίκηκεν αὐτὸς πάντα (fr. 354F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.9.3–5 Mras).

Zeus, therefore, is the whole world, animal of animals, and god of gods; but Zeus, that is, inasmuch as he is the mind from which he brings forth all things, and by his thoughts creates them. When the theologians had explained the nature of god in this manner, to make an image such as their description indicated was neither possible, nor, if anyone thought of it, could he show the look of life, and intelligence, and fore-

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[58] The *σκέπτεται* printed in Smith's text must be corrected to *σκέπεται* (which is also text-critically doubtless), see right Bidez 1913, p. 6*, 13.

thought by the figure of a sphere. But they have made the representation of Zeus in human form, because mind was that according to which he wrought, and by generative laws brought all things to completion; and he is seated, as indicating the steadfastness of his power: and his upper parts are bare, because he is manifested in the intellectual and the heavenly parts of the world; but his feet are clothed, because he is invisible in the things that lie hidden below. And he holds his sceptre in his left hand, because most close to that side of the body dwells the heart, the most commanding and intelligent organ: for the creative mind is the sovereign of the world. And in his right hand he holds forth either an eagle, because he is master of the gods who traverse air, as the eagle is master of the birds that fly aloft—or a victory, because he is himself victorious over all things (trans. IMR).

The Orphic hymn commented on here by Porphyry describes Zeus as the ruling principle and the origin of everything in the cosmos. Striking—and probably for this reason the hymn was so extensively and literally quoted by Porphyry—is that Zeus is praised 'as a demiurgic God and intellect' but is described with a body and 'in bodily images': the entire cosmos is identical with the body of Zeus, is the body of Zeus, i.e., everything has to do with Zeus and refers to him. This starts at the top, the head of Zeus referring to heaven, his eyes to the stars, over the middle (his shoulders and chest mean earth and sea) and works its way down, where the base means Tartarus.[59] This idea of Zeus as a complexly structured, spherical cosmos could, according to Porphyry, have been presented by the Orphic theologians only in the poetic hymn but not in a concrete and material image (εἰκών). Instead, they, i.e., the human artists, have created an 'anthropomorphic δείκηλον' (as 'representation' or 'correspondence'). Interesting is Porphyry's exegesis of this δείκηλον, for now he describes a—at a first glance—typological figure,[60] a seated Zeus whose upper body is naked and whose lower body is covered, holding a staff with his left hand and an eagle or a Nike in his right hand. Porphyry here explains body

[59] For further details see Gabriele & Maltomini 2014, p. 151–57.

[60] For the obvious typology of this figure described here (but without a hint to Phidias' Zeus) see Johnson 2013, p. 167–68 and 171; also Viltanioti 2017b, p. 68.

posture, nudity and attributes in both Zeus' left and right hands, details that are *not* to be found in the Orphic verses quoted but which show striking similarities to a real *agalma* of Zeus, namely the famous Zeus statue of Phidias in Olympia, and this is really remarkable. For the figure of Zeus, which Porphyry describes, corresponds exactly to the attitude and appearance of the statue of Zeus of Phidias in Olympia which had long since acquired the status of an iconographical prototypical image of Zeus and gods in Porphyry's time.[61] Yet the Zeus of Phidias is also the statue of a god par excellence, as it had for instance been integrated into the discussion of philosophers and Jewish opponents of statues as well as of Christian apologists about statues of the gods and idolatry.[62]

With his cosmological allegory of the typological statue of the sitting Zeus as transcendental demiurge, Porphyry opposes a Stoic interpretation of the Olympic statue of Zeus, as presented by Dio Chrysostomus in his Olympic speech (*Oratio* 12).[63] Even if the text of Porphyry does indeed contain seemingly Stoic terms and concepts (e.g., fr. 354.50F Smith, λόγοις σπερματικοῖς;[64] fr. 354.56F Smith, ἡγεμονικώτατον) and the physical and the etymological allegory are also used by Stoics, the strong accent on the intellectual 'demiurge' (not a Stoic material *logos*) and his title as 'king' (βασιλεύς, fr. 354.58F Smith) are here of considerable importance[65] and prove the peculiarity of Porphyry's exegesis—although Eusebius really tries to hint at dogmatic inconsistencies.[66] However, Philo already (in *De ebrietate*, esp. 89–91; cf. *De*

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[61] See Kansteiner et al. 2014, p. 221–84 (DNO 942–1020) and Gabriele & Maltomini 2014, p. 162–64.

[62] See Auffarth 2006, esp. p. 1–16.

[63] See esp. Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* 12.60, with Funke 1981, p. 752–53; Johnson 2013, p. 170; Fazzo 1977, p. 21–59; Miles 2015, p. 89 and now Stenger 2006.

[64] On the similarity of σπερματικοὶ λόγοι with Platonic ideas see Krämer 1971, p. 115–16 with n. 40.

[65] Cf. the Middle-Platonic discussion about the second letter by 'Plato' and the labelling of intellect as 'king' there, Dörrie 1970.

[66] As Eusebius says in his general introduction to this text, Porphyry seems to agree here at first with the opinion of Stoic philosophers, specifically Chairemon, but we may also think of Chrysippus: like Chrysippus, he attributes all phenomena of the cosmos to an invisible dynamism behind the phenomena as Zeus/*Logos* (the other gods are personifications of the elements or certain regions and parts of the cosmos). The cosmos as evidence of the work of a god or divine powers can

opificio mundi) identified similarities between the demiurge of the Platonic *Timaeus* (28a–29b) and the artist Phidias and between the cosmos created by the demiurge and Phidias' statue of Zeus. Despite all the criticism of images of gods, Philo seems to see in Phidias' Zeus the perfect work of art that distinguishes itself through *Sophia*. By claiming that the artist draws his inspiration from the (divine, transcendent) idea, Philo is able to appreciate the work from a Platonic perspective. Porphyry's teacher Plotinus (*Enn*. V 8 (31), 1 'On Intelligible Beauty') also takes Phidias' Zeus as an example of a beautiful prototype and considers Phidias a divinely inspired artist. However, this needs further investigation and Porphyry is now doing two things:

1) On the one hand, he explains the prototypical statue of Zeus as a sign of the demiurge and the cosmos he created at the same time. The statue of Zeus is congruent with the requirements of Plato's *Timaeus*: Porphyry uses cosmological ideas for his allegorical exegesis of the statues of gods. These allegories are in turn based on his intense engagement with Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* (Porphyry had written a detailed commentary on the *Timaeus*).[67] According to a certain reading of Plato's *Timaeus* (e.g., Plotinus'),[68] the demiurge carries the cosmos and everything he creates in himself, in the ideas he is thinking. Thus the demiurge becomes recognisable as the archetype of the human artist. The cosmos, which is the product of the demiurge, is even called a 'living image of the gods' (ζῶν [...] ἀϊδίων θεῶν ἄγαλμα, *Timaeus* 37c); it is 'alive' because it is animated by the eternal gods, i.e., the stars. As the cosmos is an ἄγαλμα, so is a statue of the god an image of the cosmos created by a human artist.[69] Hence Porphyry, who clearly identifies the statue of Zeus with the demiurge of the cosmos, endorses Philo's

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be found in Plato as well as in the Stoics up to Philo of Alexandria. However, the Stoics postulate, and this is important, always 'material, physical' gods and thus also a 'material' *Logos* or physical 'Zeus', which of course is out of the question for the Platonist Porphyry (God is immaterial, transcendent, etc.). But Porphyry obviously tries to harmonise the physical explanation method of the Stoics with his own Platonic theological view. His 'Zeus', however, is neither the problematic figure of the Homeric Zeus nor the Stoic *Logos* as a cosmic basic or physical principle, but an immaterial and transcendent demiurge of the cosmos.

[67] See Sodano 1964, see also the supplement Porphyry, fr. 172F Smith.

[68] See, e.g., *Enn*. V 5 (32).

[69] See Viltanioti 2011, p. 25.

exegesis.[70] The demiurge, as *Nous* and as creator of the world, who was so prominent in Plato's *Timaeus*, was considered by the Middle Platonists as the highest principle—even if already in Alcinous (*Didaskalikos* 10 and 28) and Numenius (cf. fr. 16.9–10; 20.4–7 des Places) there are clear signs of a differentiation of the principle and the highest God, as they regard the demiurge no longer as the highest divine principle but rather as θεὸς ἐπουράνιος.[71] Porphyry only speaks here of the demiurge as *Nous* and as cosmos, but does not say that 'this' is the highest transcendent principle or the highest transcendent God. Porphyry's approach here seems to agree with a passage from his commentary on the *Chaldean Oracles*, where he identifies the 'demiurge of the Jews' with *Nous*, which, however, is—for Chaldeans and Platonists—the second transcendent principle after the highest principle (the good).[72]

2) Yet Porphyry also differs from Philo in that he combines this statue of Zeus of Phidias, interpreted along the lines of Plato's *Timaeus*, for the first time with the *Orphic Hymn* on Zeus (and *vice versa*, as he also understands the hymn in terms of the statue). This semantic connection of the Orphic-poetic Zeus with the statue of Zeus of Phidias with the demiurge-*Nous* of Plato's *Timaeus* seems extraordinary and must be taken into account in Porphyry's decisively *Platonic* exegesis of statues of gods.

4.3.6. Platonic Allegoresis of Egyptian Gods

That Porphyry wants to highlight and accentuate the anthropomorphic shape of a god in a polemic manner can be seen once more in a passage on the Egyptian God Kneph, who is said to be the demiurge and who is described by Porphyry as an anthropomorphic demiurge. The cosmos, which he creates as it comes out of his mouth, has, moreover, the shape of a human being (fr. 360F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.11.45 Mras):

> τὸν δημιουργόν, ὃν Κνὴφ οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι προσαγορεύουσιν, ἀνθρωποειδῆ, [...] τὸν δὲ θεὸν τοῦτον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος προίεσθαι

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[70] For a metaphorical use of ἀγάλματα in Plotinus see, e.g., *Enn.* VI 9 (9), 11; *Enn.* I 6 (1), 9.7–15; see further Tanaseanu-Döbler 2013, p. 51.

[71] See Ferrari 2018a, p. 611 and 2018b, p. 653–55.

[72] Cf. Porphyry in Iohannes Lydus, *De mensibus* 4.53, p. 110.18–9 Wünsch; see also Gerson 2002, p. 376.

ᾠόν φασιν, ἐξ οὗ γεννᾶσθαι θεὸν [...] ἑρμηνεύειν δὲ τὸ ᾠὸν τὸν κόσμον. [...] αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ δείκηλον τοιόνδε ἀνέπλασαν· ἀνθρωποειδές ἐστιν ἄγαλμα.

The demiurge which the Egyptians call 'Kneph' (*sc.* they represent) in human form [...] But they say that this God has thrown out of his mouth an egg out of which a God was born, [...] but the egg means cosmos [...] but the image of the cosmos itself they designed as follows: it is an image of a god in human body [...] (trans. IMR).

We see that Porphyry is keen to point to the very fact that statues of Hellenic and Egyptian gods are to be 'read' as material, shaped signs of a higher, non-visible and transcendently divine, even *demiurgic* dynamics in a very Platonic sense. Yet this was not enough: especially offensive for Christians must have been Porphyry's account of a human being adored as a god through sacrifices and rituals in an Egyptian city named Anabis:

καὶ ἄνθρωπος δὲ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς παρείληπται. Ἄναβις γάρ ἐστι κώμη Αἰγύπτου, ἐν ᾗ θεραπεύεται ἄνθρωπος καὶ θύεται τούτῳ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν βωμῶν τὰ ἱερεῖα καίεται· (fr. 360F Smith = Eus., *PE* 3.12.5 Mras).

But even a man is allowed in the sacred things of the Egyptians. Anabis[73] is a village in Egypt, where a human being is worshipped and offerings are made and burned on the altars (trans. IMR).

These examples can demonstrate how intelligently, how elegantly and how subtly Porphyry erects his allegorical exegesis of statues of Greek and Egyptian gods as an exclusive reading for a Hellenic in-group. Keeping in mind his complex cosmological allegory, we may even expect him to address a quite advanced group of students or interested philosophers.[74] Part of his polemical strategy can already be found in the very subject of his treatise—statues of gods as objects of cult and ritual practices, which were criticised by Christians as idolatrous. Also his claim for allegory as a

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[73] Anabis is probably a corruption of Athribis, see the commentary in Gabriele & Maltomini 2014, p. 283.
[74] Quite different is Krulak 2011, who argues for philosophical beginners as addressees; cf. also Viltanioti 2017b, p. 62–63 and 70–71.

hermeneutical method for Hellenic and Egyptian gods and religion and his confutation of the very arguments used against pagan gods and their statues by Christians are clear indications of this polemic agenda. Yet we may especially understand his Platonising exegesis of Hellenic and Egyptian statues of gods and their specific cosmological, demiurgical and metaphysical semantics as a subtle, philosophical weapon in a religious war, which became more and more serious for pagan elites.

5. *Conclusion*

In sum, with Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων we not only have a defence of the ancient pagan practice of worshipping statues of the Hellenic gods. Despite all Stoic ingredients and allegorical tools, it is also a genuinely Platonic, theological 'allegorisation' of statues of the gods. This is probably meant less for use in popular religious practice than as an intellectual occupation for a small elite:[75] the statues of the gods have an anagogic function. Just like Porphyry's text *about* these statues, they lead the beholder to philosophical, rational, or, more precisely, Platonic reflections on the divine. From his point of view, they do not serve as theurgic aids, but rather are 'visual tools for the intellect'—nothing more and nothing less. When all is said and done, we can see Porphyry's explicitly polemical writing Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν and his implicitly polemical text Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων as two documents equally motivated by a growing fear and, at the same time, a desire to fight. The reactions of Eusebius and other Christians and their polemical counterattacks against these two Porphyrean texts testify to the polemical power of Porphyry's Platonic exegesis and his theological reflections on the requisites of the traditional worship of the (old) gods. At any rate, they appear to represent acts of what we might call 'identity insurance' for all philosophers and Platonists who wanted to reconcile a formal continuation of the old religious cults and ritual practices, which had always been associated with social and political stability, with a philosophically demanding and theologically satisfying interpretation for intellectuals and, above all, for Platonists.

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[75] See Schott 2008, p. 64–65.

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Abstract

The Platonist Porphyry is a member of a complex network of late antique Platonic philosophers who differ over what constitutes Platonic orthodoxy and who are involved in esoteric discussions and arguments. Moreover, Porphyry is (after Celsus) one of the earliest members of the philosophical elite to have become aware of the growing danger posed by Christian religion and philosophy. He therefore composes texts that we may interpret not only as attempting to communicate the Christian threat, but also as polemical attacks against the Christians. I consider Porphyry's polemics against the Christians to

have (at least) a twofold nature: apart from an explicit mode of arguing against their leaders and their holy texts (e.g., in *Contra Christianos*), we also find an implicit mode on which I focus in this paper. Here I will concentrate on the fragments of Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων (*De statuis*) and demonstrate how his polemics against the Christian critics of pagan idolatry turns out to be a special mode of writing and literary strategy. This strategy must be analysed together with the context of transmission of his fragments in the work of the Christian bishop and philosopher Eusebius of Caesarea (*Praeparatio Euangelica*). From his way of dealing with Porphyry's text and from the obvious Christian polemics in which he engages, we can grasp how dangerous Porphyry's philosophical explanation of the old Hellenic (and Egyptian) statues of gods must have appeared. Porphyry's text seems to have been a kind of religious manifesto that situated the old gods' statues in a broader ontological and cosmological discussion (via allegoresis). As Porphyry was an outstanding philologist and philosopher, his exegesis of the gods' statues turns out to be a distinctively philosophical and subtle polemical strategy against the Christians.

BENJAMIN DE VOS

THE *PSEUDO-CLEMENTINE HOMILIES* AND THE ART OF 'FAKE NEWS'
DECEPTIONS AND DISSIMULATIONS AIMED AT THE *GENTILE* AUDIENCE

What is the truth, what is a lie?[1] We are living in an age in which these questions are prominent, but in which 'the truth' is also under great pressure. We are overloaded with terms such as post-truth politics (even *Oxford Dictionary*'s Word of the Year 2016), 'deepfake' videos which are able to replace one's human face with any other face of a person or animal, and we are saturated with terms like hoaxes, yellow journalism and, above all, 'fake news'. The instances in which this deeply sceptical approach of 'truth' occur are more frequent than ever and show how influential and effective these tools are to influence people and/or to undermine other points of view and facts. This creates a network of discourses on 'truth' and 'veracity' in which people are getting lost. What should one still believe? 'Deepfake' videos, hoaxes and 'fake news' obscure the boundaries between fact and fiction, credible and unbelievable, and are even used to attack certain discourses of opponents by undermining their credibility. Think of the recent 'deepfake' videos in which a frightening realistic but virtually altered Obama calls Trump a 'dipshit'.[2] Be that as it may, how long will it take

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[2] See the online source //https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQ54GDm 1eL0//('You won't believe what Obama says in this video!').

before this will be common? Apart from modern media, distortion of facts, lies, attacking someone's discourse by stating that it is 'fake', is nothing new of course. Philosophers, theologians, and others have used these tools in order to undermine and attack discourses of others as 'fake' and in order to support their own discourses about what they claim to be the truth. In Late Antiquity, this tension became strong where the Greco-Roman world and upcoming (Jewish-)Christian discourses met. Representatives from both backgrounds were looking for flawless discourses about the truth, and how to refute or adapt the arguments of others. One of the effective methods is to state and to let people believe that the other's discourses about the truth are in fact just 'fake news', deliberately deceptive disinformation, while one's own discourse is the true one. Not coincidentally in his *Λόγος Ἀληθής* or the *True Word*, Celsus attacked Christian discourse as deceitful by pointing at the lie that Christ was the first and only one who had appeared to humans, when Christians believe that an angel was present at Jesus' tomb.[3] This is, of course, an attack on the core of Christianity. Porphyry, too, notoriously attacked Christianity as a fake discourse. Talking about Paul, he stated 'We conclude, then, that he is a liar and clearly the companion of lies. And it is not necessary for him to say: "I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie".[4] For the man who yesterday conforms to the law and today to the gospel, has to be regarded as a criminal, festering under the surface both in private and public life'.[5] On the other hand, Christian apologetic authors, such as Justin Martyr, Tatian, and Origen (who refuted Celsus), strongly criticised Greco-Roman discourses and described them as morally and epistemologically false. In a world in which this battle for 'truth' and 'belief' was being fought, early Christian authors wanted to present one truth within a network of so-called 'fake discourses'.[6]

An interesting additional tension is the thought that even though one claims to speak the truth and tries to convince peo-

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[3] *Contra Celsum* 5.52; cf. Mark 16.5.
[4] Cf. Rom. 9.1.
[5] *Apokritikos* 3.31 = fr. 28 Harnack, see Berchman 2005, p. 206.
[6] Think also of the ironical dialogues by the Second Sophistic author Lucian (e.g., his *Lovers of Lies*); for the social dialogue shared between Christian and Second Sophistic authors: Nasrallah 2005, p. 283–314.

ple of it, he is also allowed to lie if he can persuade people of his point of view. 'Fake news' and 'yellow journalism' in the service of loftier aims, one could say. In Early Christianity and Late Antiquity, authors such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and John Chrysostom approved white lies, contrary to Augustine who disapproved of every lie, including 'just lies', as if there would be something as 'just sins': absurd![7] Lies and distortion of truth already appear in the Old Testament, e.g., in the story of how Abraham and Sarah distort the truth by telling the Egyptians that Sarah is his sister (and keeping silent that she is in fact also his wife, Gen. 12), or when Jacob deceives Isaac and robs Esau of his birth right (Gen. 27). Elsewhere in the Scriptures (Prov. 6.12 and 6.17), the concept of lying is rejected if it harms others. One can find the same ambiguity in Greco-Roman culture. When speaking of the 'functional lie', one cannot ignore Plato, who rejects Sophists as not speaking the truth. Because he understands lying as an act of social subversion, rulers are allowed to lie only if it is for the benefit of the people.[8] Just as in the Scriptures, and later in works of the Christian authors, the intention is less important than the goal. This ambiguity is fundamental to Greek culture, and by extension ours, when one thinks of Ulysses, the most cunning and deceiving Greek in literary history, who manages to survive dangerous situations due to his control of fact and fiction: an ambiguous highlight of human rationality.

This ambiguity lived on and continued particularly in the so-called ancient Greek novels. Manipulation of fact and fiction, use of 'functional lies' and deceptions are abundant in these novels, for example when Chaereas deceives his own army in order to save it from the enemies.[9] This is in the tradition of Cicero's and Quintilian's reflections on the relationship between rhetorical manipulation and morality (*De officiis* 3.56 and *Inst.* 12.1.38).

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[7] *Contra Mendacium* 15.31; for more information on the patristic ideas about lying, see Hughes 2003, p. 899–903.

[8] E.g., in Plato's *Republic* 414b8–415e.

[9] Chaereas, commander of the Egyptian fleet, has been informed that the Egyptian land forces had been defeated. Instead of revealing this to his men, he tells them that the Persians have been defeated, and orders them to set sail (destination unknown). This prevented a mutiny and, thus, total disaster. See Chariton, *Callirhoe and Chaereas* 8.2.5.

The latter says that a good and moral orator is allowed to tell a lie (*mendacium dicat*).[10]

The same tension is found in another novel: the *Pseudo-Clementines*, which is moreover the only (surviving) (Jewish-)Christian novel.[11] It is presented in two recensions: the Greek *Homilies* or *Klementia* (*Hom.*) and the *Recognitions* (*Rec.*). The latter exists in a Latin translation/adaptation by Rufinus of Aquileia (beginning of the fifth century), and in a few Greek fragments. Both recensions most likely originated in fourth-century Syria.[12] Due to the many similarities (besides the differences) between the two versions, researchers agree that both are based on an older, but lost, so-called *Grundschrift* or *Basic Writing* from third-century Syria.[13] From an autobiographical point of view, it tells the story of the adolescent Clement. Born in Rome in a pagan family, Clement loses his mother, brothers, and father due to all kinds of generic circumstances typical of the novelistic genre, including a ship-wreck. In the second half of the story, he will, with the help of the apostle Peter, come to recognise them as is characteristic of a *romance of recognitions*. The largest part of the story, however, consists of disputes and polemical encounters. Clement is lost in a world of late ancient epistemological methods and discourses on magic, astrology, and philosophy. In order to reach the true discourse, the blurred boundaries between what is true and what is false must be discovered by Clement and by all the other audiences. This blurriness is created by deceitful opponents as well as by lies and distortions of the truth construed by Peter and Clement themselves. In this contribution, I will focus on the version of the

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[10] See also De Temmerman 2014, p. 99–100 for the link with the ancient novel.

[11] Since Erwin Rohde (1876), the *Pseudo-Clementines* are seen as an ancient novel. Contra: Czachesz 2010. For the role and meaning of 'Jewish-Christian', see Jones 2012c.

[12] For a discussion of previous scholarship, see Jones 2012a and 2012b (who points to Antioch as place of origin of both extant *Clementine* traditions) and Bremmer 2017b (with a preference for Edessa).

[13] Edwards 1992, p. 462; Heintze 1914, p. 114; Hofmann 2000, p. 134–35; Jones 2014, p. 26. For the Greek and Latin editions: Rehm 1992 and 1994. We also have a Syriac version that consists of both traditions, of which the manuscript is dated at the beginning of the fifth century, see Jones 2014.

Homilies [14] since it emphatically plays on several layers with truth, deception and dissimulation, more than the *Recognitions* do. The aforementioned tension between the refutation of discourses of opponents as 'false' and 'deceptive' and the use of 'functional lies/ dissimulations' will be important. Another focus in the *Homilies* is the role of several audiences in this network of deception and dissimulation.

Aims

1. *Deception and dissimulation on the narrative and theological level*: The first section of the paper will deal with terminology used for presenting the polemical networks of 'true' and 'false', '(Jewish-)Christian' and 'Greek' on the narrative level. From the beginning of the novel Clement will be confronted with these networks of false and true epistemological methods. His opponents are explicitly linked to the malicious art of deceiving people which, moreover, will be placed in a broader theological-historiographical framework of two prophetic lines that go back to the story of Adam and Eve. Of special interest is the tension between the rejection of opponents because they are deceiving and the use of tricks and the distortion of facts by Peter and Clement themselves as a counter-attack using an important ancient rhetorical device, *dissimulation*.

2. *Audience within the novel*. The second section will look at the audiences targeted by deceptions and dissimulations when attending the disputes told by the homodiëgetic, first-person narrator. The so-called *gentiles* play a crucial role as audiences for Peter and Simon who try to win them over. Strikingly, this is part of God's plan: *gentiles* must be tested by deceptions to expose their true nature.

3. *Readership of the novel*. The third section studies the links between three kinds of audiences on several levels: the *gentile* audiences within the novel, the *ideal reader* of the Old Testament, and the *implied reader* [15] of the novel: all three have to be

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[14] I will compare with the *Recognitions* when useful.

[15] This narratological concept of the *implied reader* goes back to Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and Wolfgang Iser's *The Implied Reader*. I will discuss this concept below.

tested. This way, the narrative framework with the many deceptions, which are meant to be a test for the first kind of audience, is nicely linked to the other audiences/readers who are tested as well in their interpretation of what is true or not.

1. *Narrative and Theological-historiographical Level*

The *Homilies* sharply distinguish between the (Jewish-)Christian (Ἰουδαῖος or θεοσεβής) and the 'Greek' (Ἕλλην) world.[16] As in the works of some Apologists (e.g., Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos*), the *Homilies* describe the Greek world as a place without any moral and epistemological truth; there are only lies, tricks and deceptions.[17] The *Homilies* use a range of words to describe the 'false, deceitful' Greek discourses and opponents: ἀπάτη (trick, fraud, deceit), ἀπατηλός (producing illusion, deceptive), ἀπατάω (to cheat, to deceive), ἀπατεών, ῶνος, ὁ (cheat, rogue), and πλάνη (deviating, going astray), πλάνος (leading astray, deceiving), πλάσμα (forgery, fiction), ψεῦδος (falsehood, lie), ψεύστης (liar, cheat), and ψεῦσμα (lie, untruth, fraud). People who give in to these discourses 'wander in error' (πλανάω) and are 'unbelievers' (ἄπιστοι).[18] This can be com-

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[16] In the *Homilies*, Judaism and Christianity are seen as presenting one and the same message. This may explain why the words 'Christian'/'Christianity' are not used. People who do not follow these doctrines are called 'Greek' (11.16.2). See also Schwartz 1932, p. 151–99; De Vos 2019a, p. 66; Stanton 2007, p. 305–24, and Patricia Duncan 2017, p. 18 who suggests that the *Homilist* did not want to use these terms because it would have been too much linked with Jesus-followers who wanted to refute Jews and Judaism. That is why the terms *theosebeia* and *theosebēs* are used to refer to Jews and *gentiles* who believe in God. For these concepts and the use of them in the Hellenistic period by Jews who wished to highlight the universalistic claim of Judaism, see Lieu 1995, p. 483–501.

[17] See also Cameron 1994, in particular p. 95–96.

[18] Translations are from the *LSJ*. ἀπάτη is especially linked to Simon (2.27.3, 28.1, 33.4), the deceiving serpent (10.10.2), the non-Jewish-Christian background (10.17.2, 18.2; 11.9.3) and the false prophets (11.35.3). ἀπατηλός is used once for the discourse against the pious one (10.12.1). ἀπατάω is often used for describing the polytheistic, demonic, deceiving nature of the discourses of Simon and other opponents of the 'true discourse': 1.21.8; 2.25.3–4, 29.2, 29.5; 3.3.2, 1 2.1, 13.2, 17.2, 18.1, 24.4, 42.6; 10.10.2, 12.2, 19.1; 11.3.2, 5.3, 18.2; 9.7.2, 13.1–2, 22.5–6; 13.8.1, 8.3; 16.2.4, 13.6; 18.7.3, 19.2; 20.9.3, 16.2, 16.6. ἀπατεών serves as Peter's characterisation of Simon: 2.18.3. Πλάνη defines the opponent's discourse as 'false': EpP 3.2, EpCl 7.4; 1.18.3, 33.2; 2.37.1; 3.16.1, 27.1; 9.7.3, 15.1; 10.9.3; 11.19.1–2, 31.1–2, 32.3, 33.4–5, 35.5; 13.7.4, 13.2, 21.3; 18.20.3. In the same line stands πλάνος: EpCl 14.3, 19.4; 2.17.4, 18.2; 3.24.4; 4.2.3; 17.14.4; 20.18.2–4, 19.2, 19.7 and πλάσμα: 18.5.6. Everything that denies the

pared to the ancient distinction concerning true and false between what is *plasmatikon/dramatikon* (what did not take place and what is also not credible), *argumentum/mythos* (what did not take place but what is credible), and *historia* (what one believes to have taken place).[19] It is clear that the discourse of the enemies, according to the *Homilies*, is linked to the first category.[20] Some of the terms are also used by the 'Greek' opponents to undermine the (Jewish-) Christian discourse,[21] but not to the same degree. Moreover, the *Homilies* attack several epistemological discourses (astrology and philosophy) by connecting these with the literary construction of the 'Greek, deceptive' world in which Clement feels lost.

1.1. Clement's Quest for Truth

In the beginning, the reader is immediately informed that Clement, after losing his family, feels lost in a world in which he is unable to find answers to his existential questions (1.1–2 'Will the world ever perish?', 'What comes after death?'). Clement is on a quest for answers and wanders through a big network of epistemological discourses. He visits several Greek schools to learn philosophy (1.3.1–4) and considers going to Egypt in order to experience a performance of necromancy by a magician and to learn whether the soul is immortal (1.5). Later, he again meets philosophers in Alexandria whom he refutes (1.8–14). He explores other epistemological methods, such as astrology and allegoresis

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almighty God is ψεῦδος (2.40.1; 3.43.2; 9.16.2, 16.4; 10.23.1; 11.12.1; 16.14.5), ψεύστης (3.14.1, 25.2; 16.4.3) and ψεῦσμα (3.17.6; 16.13.5). πλανάω: Diam 5.2; 2.15.5, 33.1, 51.2; 3.16.2, 50.1, 53.2; 6.18.3; 10.2.1, 2.2, 23.2; 11.19.1, 31.2, 33.3–4; 13.21.2; 16.10.1; 18.20.3. ἄπιστος: 11.17.4; 12.32.2; 13.10.6. See also, e.g., Tatian's use of πλάνη for marking the Greek error in which he firstly participated (*Oratio ad Graecos* 29.1.2).

[19] This distinction can already be found in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1.13. See also De Temmerman 2016, p. 5–6.

[20] In line with the Early Christian discourses, the second category of the *mythos* is undermined in the *Homilies* as being vain and without any truth in it—at least the myths used by the 'Greeks'. For a more elaborated discussion, see De Vos 2019b and 2021.

[21] ἀπατάω: 4.7.2 (Appion says that Peter has misled the young Clement); 3.38.1 (Simon says that Peter deceives his audience); 14.3.1–4 (Clement's father is scared to be misled by Peter's teachings). ψεῦδος: 17.13.2 (Simon calls one of Peter's viewpoints a lie); πλανάω: 16.9.4 (Simon states that the Scriptures are misleading people).

of mythology as part of Greek *paideia*,[22] which already included rhetoric and philosophy, but none of this helps him to find the answers he needs. After having heard someone talking about a prophet in the Middle East, he undertakes a journey to Palestine and becomes a follower of Peter, the main apostle in the story. In his presence, Clement gradually learns the true prophetic knowledge, as proclaimed by the True Prophet, who is Christ[23] in the *Pseudo-Clementines*.

This true prophetic knowledge is defended throughout the story as the sole truth. Peter has several disputes with his main opponent Simon Magus whom is known from the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Apocryphal Acts of Peter*.[24] Here, he functions as a magician, a heretic,[25] but also as someone who has a strong background in Greek *paideia*. In Simon's character, several epistemological forms are thus rejected.[26] A minor opponent is Appion,[27] a follower of Simon. In Tyre, he has several disputes with Clement (*Hom.* 4–6) and shares a number of characteristics with the Apion mentioned in the *Contra Apionem* of Flavius Josephus, such as the link with magic, anti-Judaism and a background in Greek *paideia*. In the *Clementines*, he mainly acts as a 'grammarian' who wants to show and defend his background in Greek *paideia* in the discussions with Clement. Two other opponents are Annubion and Athenodorus. They play only a minor role in the story.[28] The former is an astrologer, the latter an Epicurean philosopher. Simon

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[22] In short, Greek *paideia* stands for a system of education and network of Greek culture(s) that included rhetoric, philosophy, history, mathematics and so on.

[23] The death and crucifixion of Jesus play almost no role in the *Homilies* (11.20.4 refers to his crucifixion, and 3.19 to his death). There are no references to Jesus' death in the rituals in Peter's group. Baptism is linked to *anagenesis*, but not to Jesus' crucifixion as Paul did in Rom. 6.3–11. For a general discussion on Jesus in the *Homilies*, Le Boulluec 2009, p. 365–83. Cf. A. C. Headlam 1902, p. 54: 'Christ is a prophet, and only a prophet'.

[24] Haar 2003 and MacRae 2019.

[25] In the *Homilies*, he is defined as the beginning of all heresy (16.21.3–4). See already Irenaeus' *Aduersus Haereses* 1.23.4.

[26] In the character of Simon several, possible historical persons such as Paul, Marcion and Iamblich may be recognised and unified in order to be rejected: see Offerhaus 1894; Meyboom 1902, p. 150; Côté 2001a and 2001b.

[27] 'Apion' refers to the historical character and 'Appion' to the narrative figure in the *Homilies*, see Bremmer 2017a, p. 251–65.

[28] See De Vos 2019a, p. 63.

and his companions are followed by several other unnamed *pepaideumenoi*. Thus, the novel beautifully displays an epistemological network that stretches over the Mediterranean landscape in which Clement is searching his way.

As a novel, the *Homilies* do not merely offer a résumé of the doctrine of the True Prophet or a scientific treatment of the value of other epistemological methods. The reader becomes informed by reading Clement's life story. This framework plays with the rejection of opponents and their truth claims, but also with the concealment of truth and disclosure of knowledge, how people believe what is true, and how they are being deceived on several levels. The True Prophet puts it as follows: 'The truth does not lie on the surface' (3.52).[29] The *Clementines* play with the motifs of lying, deception, dissimulation and mimesis. As in the Greek novels, many deceptions and dissimulations occur, including visual illusions or the creation of false situations. According to the *Homilies*, the opponents use several epistemological methods to spread deliberate disinformation and to perform deceptions on their audiences, they rely on magic and on Greek *paideia*.

1.2. Magical Deceptions

After recognising his father,[30] Clement has at last found his entire family. Simon Magus, however, is trying to confuse everyone by giving Clement's father his own face[31] in order to flee without being recognised.[32] Transfiguration is made into a tool of decep-

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[29] Translations are from Riddle & Smith 2004 (any changes I made are indicated).

[30] Faustus in the *Homilies*, Faustinianus in the *Recognitions*.

[31] To achieve this, Simon used a kind of potion, μύρον (*Hom.* 20.16.5; *unguentum Rec.* 10.58.5) consisting of βοτάνος χυλοί (*Hom.* 20.16.6) or *herbae sucus* (*Rec.* 10.58.6). This transfiguration scene was part of the *Basic Writing*; see also Amsler 2005, p. 446; Pouderon 2018. According to Headlam (1902, p. 49), the story of Simon and Faustus and the additional contests in Antioch were no part of the *Basic Writing*.

[32] The link between transfiguration and Simon is also found in the *Acts of Peter and Paul* where he impresses Nero by changing into an old man, a mature man and a young adult. Also Satan and Christ himself perform such transformations, e.g., in the *Acts of John* § 87 (Jesus changes himself into John and appears to Drusiana) or § 88–89 (Jesus appears in different shapes to different people at the same time). See also the *Acts of Peter* § 21 (several widows saw a different shape of God at the same time).

tion and is intended to confuse the audience. This is characteristic for Simon's magic, as Peter stated earlier (2.34.2):

> Those, then, are useless signs, which you say that Simon did. But I say that making statues walk, and rolling himself on burning coals, and becoming a dragon, and *being changed into a goat*, and flying in the air, and all such things, not being for the healing of man, *are of a nature to deceive* (προσαπατᾶν) *many*. But the miracles of compassionate truth are philanthropic, such as you have heard that the Lord did, [...].

Magic in itself, however, is not an illusion. Simon can perform magic.[33] The deception lies in the goal. The magic offers no benefit for the people. Simon makes people sick, Peter heals them. That lack of benefit is also made clear in the case of Simon's follower, Appion. In 5.3, Appion points out that when he fell in love with a woman, he used magic to force her to love him back. When she eventually fell in love with Appion, he—satisfied—left her for another woman. This discussion about magic fits the historical context of the first centuries AD: magic and miracles were important issues in early Christianity. Christian authors did not reject the latter, but they did not want to be called imposters or charlatans (γοητής).[34] In the audience's perception, this distinction was not always clear. The *Homilies* thus try to define the theoretical difference between magic and miracles[35] in their different goals and combine this act of definition with a process of 'othering'[36] (which will be linked with the *Homilistic* doctrine of 'syzygiae', as I discuss below).

1.3. Deceptive Greek *paideia*

The motif of deception is also connected with Greek *paideia*, which is strongly problematised in the novel. The *Clementines*

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[33] In the *Acts of Peter* his powers seem to be more limited: he cannot bring the dead to life, at most the dead man moves his head for a moment. See Luttikhuizen 1998, p. 39–51.

[34] For more information about magic in the Greco-Roman world: see Dickie 2003. For a discussion about magic in the *Clementines*, see Bremmer 2017b, p. 236–49 and De Vos 2019a, p. 76–80.

[35] For this widely discussed, general distinction between magic and miracles in Early Christianity, see e.g., Marguerat 2003, p. 100–24, Kyrtatas 2006, p. 31–40, and Van Pelt 2021, p. 55–80.

[36] For this process, see the brief but insightful discussion by Aune 2007, p. 260–63.

clearly place the teachings of the True Prophet, preached by Peter, above 'pagan' mythology and philosophy which is at the heart of Greek *paideia*. One of their most important critiques is the rhetorical, even eristic, character of Greek philosophy. Philosophers are constantly discussing with ever-changing hypotheses. The variable hypotheses never were able to give Clement a clear answer to one of his fundamental questions. Greek *paideia* fails its purpose (*Hom.* 1.3); philosophers are 'vain philologists, and not truth-loving philosophers' (1.11.7): [37]

> Perceiving, therefore, now that the acceptance does not depend on the real nature of the subjects discussed, but that opinions are proved to be true or false, according to the ability of those who defend them, I was still more than ever at a loss in regard of things (1.3).

This cacophony of philosophical hypotheses is a *topos* of the *dissensus philosophorum*. The Sceptics used it as an argument against other Hellenistic schools and it was later re-used in a Christian context.[38] In the *Homilies*, this topic is used in order to 'reveal' that this world has no solid basis of truth. Two dynamics of attack are merged together: *pepaideumenoi* consciously use their background to mislead people; on a meta-level, they cannot do anything but deceive people because they do not have the truth. All Greek *paideia* is deceptive anyway.

Simon and Appion have been trained in Greek *paideia* [39] and consciously use this background, specifically mythology, to deceive people (2.25.3).

> [...] by explaining certain things of this sort [allegories] 'as true', made up from Grecian myths, he [Simon] deceives (ἀπατᾷ) many.

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[37] 'εἰκῆ φιλόλογοί ἐστε καὶ οὐ φιλαλήθεις φιλόσοφοι'.

[38] See Justin's *Dialogue with Tryphoon* 2.1–2. But see also Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana* (1.7–8) of which the eponymous character, after leaving all philosophical schools, becomes a follower of Phythagoras.

[39] For Simon, see, e.g., *Hom.* 2.22: Ἑλληνικῇ παιδείᾳ πάνυ ἐξασκήσας and *Hom.* 4.6 for Appion as grammarian: γραμματικὸν τὴν ἐπιστήμην. This characterisation of Simon is unique in comparison to other Christian texts.

Appion wants to deceive by using his Greek rhetorical back-ground as a grammarian.[40] In the disputes with Clement[41] about the value and role of Greek *paideia*, an anecdote is told about the past. Appion was a friend of Clement's father and, during a visit, found the young Clement ill. He suspected that Clement was lovesick and tried to help him with a so-called 'ode to adultery' (5.9–19). Appion's *encomium* in letter form, written on behalf of the young Clement, was meant to convince/seduce[42] a matrona of the benefits of adultery. In order to achieve this, Appion uses his background in Greek *paideia*.[43] He refers to Zeus as the prime example of the god who commits adultery and the positive consequence this has for the women with whom Zeus committed adultery: they receive all kinds of gifts. Of course, the author of the letter is not a god.

1.4. The Doctrine of the *syzygiae*

The doctrine of the *syzygiae* holds that everything comes in pairs of opposites.[44] Adam stands for the true, better, masculine prophecy and Eve for the false, worse, feminine prophecy.[45] Deception is linked to the latter (3.24):

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[40] An interesting copy of an inscription attributed to 'the historical' Apion has been discovered recently, which honorates him as a poetic victor. It enlists all the privileges and honours conferred on him for his victories in poetic contests. See Benaissa 2014, p. 125–38.

[41] The *Recognitions* do not include the disputes between Appion and Clement; see De Vos 2017, 2019a and 2019b.

[42] Using *paideia* for seducing someone is also a topic in the *Greek novels*, e.g., Clitophon in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* tries to seduce Leucippe by giving a series of speeches on desire in nature (1.16–18).

[43] On *encomium* and *invective* in classical rhetorical education, see e.g., Kennedy 2003, p. 50.

[44] Introduced to his students on the second day of the disputes in Caesarea (2.15–18), this theory is a unique feature of the *Homilies*. One could notice an echo in the *Recognitions* when Peter speaks of a doctrine of *paria* (e.g., Pharao vs. Abraham, Egyptian wizards vs. Moses, *Rec.* 3.61.1). Maybe the editor/author of the *Recognitions* found it too unorthodox (see Côté 2001a, p. 93). According to Strecker (1981, p. 146, 154) this theory goes back to the so-called *Kerygmata Petrou*, one of the hypothetical, but contested sources of the *Basic Writing* (see also Schoeps 1970, p. 532).

[45] For a more elaborate discussion of this female prophetic principle and its relation to the *Basic Writing*, see Bazzana 2008, p. 313–20. Noteworthy, Eve is not mentioned by name. Amsler (2014a, p. 202) connects this to the unnamed

and those who desire to learn truth from her, by telling them all things contrary, and presenting many and various services, she keeps them always [searching] and finding nothing, even until death. For from the beginning a cause of death lies upon blind men; for she, *prophesying deceit, and ambiguities, and obliquities, deceives those who believe her* (τοὺς πιστεύοντας ἀπατᾷ).[46]

God has ensured that every next generation is characterised by a 'pair', of which the first/the inferior will stand in the line of Eve, the second/the superior in that of Adam.[47] The superior has to overcome the inferior. Thus there are Caïn and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Aäron and Moses, Simon the Magician and Peter, and eventually the Antichrist and Christ.[48] Caïn is represented as a murderer and a liar (*phoneus, pseustes, Hom.* 3.26), Abel as the truthful and good part of the two. The epistemological framework ('true' and 'false/deceptive') is linked to a moral one ('better' and 'worse'). Noticeably, Greek *paideia* and magic are part of this theological construction. Simon the Magician, Appion and their followers, the *pepaideumenoi*, are on a par with Eve and Caïn. Simon is the deceiving 'anti-saint',[49] Peter is the speaker of truth (2.18):

> Since, then, as I [Peter] said, some men do not know the rule of combination [*syzygiae*], thence they do not know who is my precursor Simon. For if he were known, he would not be believed; but now, not being known, he is improperly believed; [...] *and though a deceiver, he is believed as a speaker of truth* (καὶ πλάνος ὢν ὡς ἀληθεύων ἀκούεται).

women of other Old Testament men. Of course, it is strange since Eve's role is very important in the *Homilies*.

[46] For a discussion of the roles of Adam and Eve in the *Homilies*, see De Vos 2021.

[47] This seems to be paradoxical: the second stands in line of Adam who is created before Eve. In the *Homilies* there is a difference between the order of events created by God and the order of events concerning humans. God first created the 'superior', then the 'inferior'. In human affairs, there is first 'evil', then 'good'. In this way, Adam and Eve, as creatures of God, are part of the first order. The next generation, Caïn and Abel, belongs to the second order. See Amsler 2014a, p. 198–200.

[48] For the view that these lists are part of a reaction *contra* Marcionism and Gnostic groups: Magri 2008.

[49] For the literary presentation of the *magos* as 'anti-hero' in (later) Christian texts, see Vlavianos 2013, p. 253–71.

1.5. Contra-deceptive Measures. Dissimulation against the Opponents

There is, however, an interesting tension here. Though the *Clementines* present the (Jewish-)Christian 'truth' in contrast to the so-called lies and deceptions of the opponents, the (Jewish-) Christian discourse is not free from deliberately mystifying the boundaries between truth and lie. Strikingly, it does not reject the motif of deception in itself:[50] illusions and deceptions are used against opponents. The *Clementine* discourse makes use of *dissimulation* to nullify and counter-attack the deception by the opponents. This figure of speech is linked to 'contrast' and *eironeia*, in the sense of 'feigned ignorance', which was important in ancient rhetoric[51] and already goes back to Socrates in the early Platonic *Dialogues*. It is a device to conceal the truth, a 'performatively contradictory principle of ignorance'.[52] It can be the aim of this concealment, '[...] in strategic irony deliberately to maintain the state of misunderstanding, because the speaker does not (yet) wish ultimately or yet to reveal his opinion'.[53] Peter and Clement use this rhetorical device in order to refute their opponents. It plays with veracity, making believe that one does not know the act of deception the other is trying to conduct. Not only the opponent will not see through this in most cases, but the audience too will be misled by this *dissimulation*. The particularity in the use of deception by Peter and Clement is that *dissimulation* can be based on what someone thinks to be the 'truth', which justifies the use (the goal is more important than the intention).

When Peter discovers that Simon literally 'face-swapped' with Clement's father, instead of revealing it, he uses it against Simon by letting 'pseudo-Simon' testify in front of the people of Antioch that Peter has actually been right the whole time. In this way

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[50] Meyboom (1902, p. 147) is not a fan of this 'lack' of true depth in the *Clementine*, ethical system: 'dat wie de klok luiden aan de processie niet deelnemen', [those who ring the bell, do not participate in the procession].

[51] Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.2.46. See Lausberg 1998, p. 403–07 and Barth 2006.

[52] Barth 2006.

[53] Walde & Erler 2006 (who refer to Cicero's *Brutus* 292 and 298).

the crowd will turn against Simon.[54] So, Peter uses this case of deception[55] to his own advantage through dissimulation,[56] which becomes even clearer in the rest of this passage. When Clement's father has left for Antioch, Appion and Athenodorus arrive in Laodicea. They question Peter and the others about Clement's father, who had left them as 'pseudo-Simon' the day before. Peter, however, pretends to be ignorant here (20.21–22; par. *Rec.* 10.63–65):

> And when they came in and sat down, and said, 'Where is Faustus?' Peter answered: 'We know not; for since the evening, when he went to you, he has not been seen by his kinsmen. But yesterday morning Simon came in search of him; and when we made no reply to him, something seemed to come over him, for he called himself Faustus; but not being believed, he wept and lamented, and threatened to kill himself, and then rushed out in the direction of the sea'. When Appion and those who were with him heard this, they howled and lamented, saying: 'Why did you not receive him?' And when at the same time Athenodorus wished to say to me, 'It was Faustus, your father'; Appion anticipated him, and said, 'We learned from some one that Simon, finding him, urged him to go along with him, Faustus himself entreating him, since he did not wish to see his sons after they had become Jews. And hearing this, we came, for his own sake, in search of him. But since he is not here, it is plain that he spake the truth who gave us the information which we, hearing it from him, have given to you'.

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[54] In the *Recognitions*, Peter instructs Clement's father (as a 'pseudo-Simon') to tell the people that Simon is a *deceptor* (*Rec.* 10.61.2.3) whereafter they threaten 'pseudo-Simon's' life. The *Homilies* end by telling that Peter is on his way to Antioch (*Hom.* 20.23.5). In the *Recognitions* it is told that Simon returns to Antioch, tries to change faces again, but is stopped by Christ himself.

[55] Another example (not present in *Rec.*) is met when Simon accuses Peter of causing an earthquake to frighten the people and to present himself as God. Peter uses this case of deception and the ignorance of the people to his own advantage by stating that he actually can and will overthrow the city if they do not believe him (7.9).

[56] At the end of the *Clementines*, the emperor issues a decree that all the magicians are to be driven out (*Rec.* 10.55.3). However, in the *Homilies* it is said that the centurion Cornelius helped Peter and his spies in spreading the rumour that the Emperor issued such a decree, so that Simon had to flee (20.13.6). Simon is twice the victim.

Appion tries to save the situation (by using dissimulation himself), but it is Clement who understands Peter's act of dissimulation here and even elaborates on it (20.22):

> And I Clement, perceiving the design of Peter, that he wished to beget a suspicion in them that he intended to look out among them for the old man, that they might be afraid and take to flight, assisted in his design, and said to Appion: 'Listen to me, my dearest Appion. We were eager to give to him, as being our father, what we ourselves deemed to be good. But if he himself did not wish to receive it, but, on the contrary, fled from us in horror, I shall make a somewhat harsh remark, "Nor do we care for him"'. And when I said this, they went away, as if irritated by my savageness; and, as we learn next day, they went to Judæa in the track of Simon.

This way, both Peter and Clement have rhetorical control of the situation. In fact, it is not the first time Clement deceives Appion by feigning ignorance. This 'contra-deception' also works on the level of Greek *paideia*. In the dispute with Appion, Clement wants to quote the *encomium* on adultery as an example of morally corrupt Greek *paideia* (5.9.5). However, the matrona to whom the letter was written did not exist, because Clement was lying about his lovesickness. The young Clement was sick due to the lack of any truth in the Greek schools. As a matter of fact, the 'response' to the letter is also added in the story: an answer written by the 'Roman matrona', refuting Appion's *encomium*. Clement is portrayed as someone who is consciously arranging the style and content of the speeches of certain characters, which was a rhetorical exercise in Greek *paideia*, called *ethopoiia*. In other words, Clement displays his education in counter-attacking Appion. While the latter was trying to deceive the 'Roman matrona', it was actually Clement who was deceiving Appion by dissimulation. The same Greek background is used in deception and 'contra-deception'.[57]

As has become clear, the *Homilistic* story is about the search for the truth in a world in which the true and the false literally take

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[57] See for more detailed information about Greek *paideia* and the encomium on adultery: Côté 2008 and Pouderon 2012; on how Clement and Appion use Greek *paideia* against each other: De Vos 2019a and 2019b.

on each other's form. But this always happens for audiences which attend those confrontations and are overwhelmed by the deceptions performed.[58] The role of the audience is important since the polemics are not only about the truth, but also about persuasion. How people react is an indicator for who has convinced them: e.g., in 7.10 they expel Simon.[59] These audiences share the same characteristic: they are *gentile*.

2. *'Gentiles' as Targeted Audience within the Novel*

The *Homilies* place great emphasis on the *gentiles* as the audience of the True Prophet, Peter and Simon Magus.[60] According to Peter in a discourse to his audience in the garden of a certain Maroones, there are two major periods in human history: a first period from Adam to Moses,[61] and a second from Moses to Jesus. This division depends on the role given to the Law. The eternal Law of God was first communicated to Adam (8.10.1–3). The Law, the Torah, was then given to Moses, who in turn handed it orally over to 70 elders of the Jewish people. But the Law became corrupted after Moses' death since it was written down. Due to the act of writing down the Law, and due to fallible human

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[58] Deception and belief are intrinsically linked. See, e.g., *Oxford Dictionary of English*, s.v. 'deceive': '[with object] deliberately cause (someone) to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain'. See also Parmisano 2003, p. 588–89.

[59] Another example can be found in the *Recognitions* (2.70.3 and 3.48.3–49.1). After the disputes at Caesarea between Peter and Simon, people leave Simon in favour of Peter. 3000 are present at the beginning of these disputes, and 1000 follow Simon at the end of the first day. The next day there are still a few followers of Simon left, but eventually everyone has left him.

[60] See also the recent article of Zetterholm who points out that: 'We should note that Peter's homilies about true worship of God are always addressed to non-Jews, and [...], the laws he urges them to observe are those that according to the Hebrew Bible (Lev. 17–18) are binding upon non-Jews. Thus, contrary to what has often been assumed in earlier scholarship, there is no reason to think that the laws he prescribes are intended for a uniform group of "Christian", Jewish as well as gentile' (2019, p. 71).

[61] Though Moses, unlike Adam and Jesus, is not called a prophet in the *Homilies*, he certainly is portrayed as one having prophetic features such as *prognosis* (3.44.1, 3.47.4). Moses' role is more focused on the relation he had with the Law than on the way he is portrayed in that Law/Torah.

nature, false pericopes entered the Law.[62] The truthful teachings, however, remained in Jewish ranks, kept by the Pharisees.[63] This is crucial in the history of humanity: keeping the true knowledge in Jewish ranks required the birth of Jesus in order to reveal the truth to the *gentiles* (3.18.3–19.1). Even though Moses and Jesus have different roles, they represent the same kind of knowledge because Judaism and Christianity are seen as a unity in the *Homilies*. It is Jesus' role to reveal this to the *gentiles*.[64] So the same truth is revealed to two different audiences in two different times, and this truth goes back to the first man, Adam. This focus on the *gentiles* as audience is continued by Simon and Peter, which fits the theory of the *syzygiae*.[65] Simon first deceives the *gentiles*, then Peter cures them physically and epistemologically (2.33).

> You must perceive, brethren, the truth of the rule of conjunction [...] And now also, when the Gentiles are about to be ransomed from the superstition with respect to idols, wickedness, which reigns over them, has by anticipation sent forth her ally like another serpent, even this Simon whom you see, who works wonders to astonish and deceive (πρὸς κατάπληξιν καὶ ἀπάτην), not signs of healing to convert and save.

This can be observed in the case of Clement himself: raised a pagan, he became a follower of Peter. The problem is the ignorance of

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[62] An example of a false pericope is that God would be ignorant (2.68–69). See for an analysis of the theory of false pericopes Vaccarella 2007, who compares the *Homilies* with the *Didascalia* and the *Letter to Flora*. See also Shuve 2008 and 2018. Strecker and Schoeps considered this kind of approach of the Scriptures as rationalistic. Schoeps noted (1969, p. 94–95): 'It must be observed that the biblical criticism of the *Kērygmata Petrou* is thoroughly permeated with rationalism, its distinctive feature. One could in fact refer to it as a sample of an ancient Enlightenment'. Strecker (1981, p. 169) calls it 'die Kriterie der Vernunft'.

[63] Here, Rabbinic thoughts on the oral Torah seem to have influenced the *Homilies*. Rabbis were said to possess an oral transmission that went back to Moses himself. See Shuve 2008, p. 441.

[64] In this way, the Christian movement is in fact a *gentile* orientated movement which still strongly refers to the Jewish lifestyle. This is a criticism towards authors, such as Eusebius later, who saw Christianity as only a *gentile* movement in breach with Judaism.

[65] The theory of *paria* in the *Recognitions* is also created by God in order to test people (*Rec.* 3.55.1, *ad temptationem*). For example, God let the magicians argue with Moses, in order that the Pharao had to use his free will and had to choose between them (*Rec.* 3.55.5).

the *gentiles*; they are raised in a context of 'false' knowledge which takes away their freedom.[66] Peter tries to restore the original, free constitution of man (cf. 8.16)[67] and states that he received the instruction to baptise and, above all, to teach the *ignorant gentiles* (ἀμαθῆ ἔθνη; 17.7.1). Knowledge of the secrets is the key to the kingdom (18.15.6–7). In the scheme of human history, the revelation of the True Prophet to the *gentiles* is a last step before the ultimate revelation of Christ and the End of Times (2.17).

2.1. Troubles Seeing the Truth. Opponents as Mirroring Doppelgänger

This knowledge, however, is difficult to see and to reach for *gentiles* due to false messages and the many cases of deception and dissimulation. This is related to two other important motifs in the *Homilies*: *mimesis* ('mirroring')[68] and the 'Döppelganger'-motif. Both parties, Peter and his entourage and Simon and his followers, are constantly looking for the limits of 'mirroring' each other. The *Clementines* deliberately and playfully obfuscate the boundaries between the 'false' and 'true' sides for the *gentile* audiences. The *gentiles* do not always see the difference between good and bad, right and wrong. When Simon and Peter practice magic against each other, it even becomes extremely difficult to see the truth. This blurring of the boundaries between good and false is linked to the theory of *syzygies*, especially with the case of Peter and Simon. Both pretend to be apostles. Peter says that Simon presents himself as an apostle of Jesus (17.19.4):[69]

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[66] For example: according to Clement, demons have invented Greek *paideia* (*Hom*. 4.12.1) and are ruling over people when these latter accept this epistemological, cultural system (which is characterised as rabies, 4.21). Later in the *Homilies*, Peter says to the public that demons control people if the latter sacrifice to them. Without knowing what the consequences are, people eat from this sacrificial meat and become sick: they are under the control of the demons (*Hom*. 8.22.1–2; 9.9.5).

[67] See also *Hom*. 10.6.1–4: 'And being accounted to be sons by reason of your likeness to Him, you shall be reinstated as lords of all'.

[68] For the theme of *mimesis* as an act of 'mirroring' in general (literature, theatre, philosophy, ...), see Zimbrich 2006.

[69] Meyboom (1891, p. 13) wrote almost 130 years ago: ''t Gevecht schijnt soms een spiegelgevecht' ['The fight sometimes seems to be a "mirror"-fight']. In fact, Simon cannot 'be' without Peter, and the qualities of Peter are highlighted by the presence of Simon, or, as Côté (2001a, p. 92) writes: 'En fait, le personnage

> But if you [70] were seen and taught by Him, and became His apostle for a single hour, proclaim His utterances, interpret His sayings, love His apostles, contend not with me who companied with Him.

The ignorant audience finds it hard not to be deceived. Simon presents Peter as the evil sorcerer, just as Peter would do with Simon,[71] and Appion states that Clement is being deceived by Peter (4.7.2). But why is this made so difficult, especially when God is presented as almighty? It is all part of a divine plan, as the *Homilies* want to show.

2.2. Evil and Deceptions as a Test of the Gentile's Worthiness

In the novel, it is all part of God's plan. The *syzygiae*, Evil, the false prophecies, the deceptions, and the opponents are in fact in God's service who wanted 'this other side' to come into existence.[72] According to the *Homilies* the Devil did not turn from Good to Evil, but his evil disposition[73] came into existence according

de Simon n'existe qu'en présence de Pierre ou en rapport avec Pierre. [...] Nous pourrions résumer notre pensée en disant que la figure de Simon fonctionne ici comme une sorte de repoussoir: sa profession, ses prétentions et ses lacunes font ressortir avec plus de clarté les qualités de l'apôtre Pierre'.

[70] This passage is one of the arguments that Simon stands for Paul; see Salles 1957, p. 522.

[71] See e.g., also Clement's intervention (towards Bernice) in *Hom.* 4.2.3. In *Rec.* (3.57.4–5), Nicetas discusses the difficulty for the audience to distinguish Jesus's signs and miracles from an impostor's magic. See also *Acts of Peter* § 4 where Simon refers to Paul before the people as a wizard and deceiver. Also later in the *Acts of Peter*, people are doubting Peter's miracles due to Simon's magical abilities (§ 12) and think of Peter as an imposter (§ 28).

[72] In order to defend God from the charge of creating Evil, Peter explains in his discourse (*Hom.* 19–20) that God allowed the mingling of the four elements in such a way that a malicious disposition (προαίρεσις τῶν κακῶν) would be created. The four substances in themselves are free of all evil (*Hom.* 19.12.3, also 3.33 and *Rec.* 4.23.3 and thus part of the *Basic Writing*). The *Homilies* describe the evil disposition in Aristotelian terms as 'accidens' (20.8, evil as 'accidens' cannot be found in *Rec.*). For more about the origin of evil according to the *Clementines*, see also Bussell 1896, Meyboom 1902, p. 116–17, 121; Schoeps 1972, p. 129–41; and Vielberg 2012, p. 47–67.

[73] Unique in its Christian context is that in the *Homilies*, when the End comes, the devil's physical, evil disposition will be changed by God into a good one (20.3). In this, it is different from Origen's *apokatastasis* since it focuses on the physical disposition of the Devil: 'Ist der Plan einmal verwirklicht—in der

to God's plan and τέχνη (19.12.3–6).[74] Why? *Gentiles* are being tested. Not every *gentile* deserves to receive the salutary knowledge. Humans have a free will (e.g., 2.15.2), they are able to choose what they want to believe. One is able to choose between the two Kingdoms (20.3.1–4), and one is responsible for one's wrong choices and sins. Evil (in general) with accompanying deceptions seems to have a positive role in human history. It serves to test the *gentiles* and wants to reveal their piety or impiety if they are willing to believe impious, deceptive falsehoods about God, as Peter explains the purpose of Simon to Clement: [75]

> [...] because from their childhood their minds are accustomed to take in things spoken against God. And few there shall be of them, as a few out of a multitude, who through ingenuousness shall not be willing so much as to hear an evil word against the God who made all things. And to these alone from amongst the Gentiles it shall be vouchsafed to be saved. Let not any one of you, therefore, altogether complain of Simon, or of anyone else; for nothing happens unjustly, [...] with good reason presented for a test (3.4).[76]

In the *Homilies*, two important terms are connected to this testing of one's piety and pious use of free will: *politeia* and *monarchia*. First, *politeia* means something like one's life-course. One has to reject the Greek way of living and to take on the Jewish one (for example Justa, 2.19.3). One who does not, will not be healed or

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Endzeit—, kann auch der Teufel gern und gut ein μετασυγκριθείς ἀγαθός werden' (Schoeps 1972, p. 136).

[74] The *Homilies* carefully distinguish deceptions as part of God's plan and a deceptive God. God himself does not perform deceptions, He lets another power be deceptive according to His plan (e.g., 3.55.2). The tension between the act of deceiving, God's will and His righteousness can also be found in Philo's *De Decalogo* 176 and in James 1.13–14. See De Luca 2008, p. 337–49. A tension remains between a provident and omniscient God and the God who lets deception be part of His plan, in order to be righteous. Compare also with Job 1.6.

[75] This is of course part of the broader Christian discourse on tests and temptations. See *The Life of Antony* 5, where it is stated that no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven if he/she has not experienced temptation.

[76] Interestingly, another case of divine testing is 'astrology', which is especially elaborated in the *Recognitions*. Astral determinism seems to be real, but actually demons are just trying to convince people of it. However, this is part of God's plan. He wants to create confusion in order to test the piety of people (*Rec.* 8.52.2).

saved. The other term is *monarchia*, meaning that God is the only God; this notion already goes back to Adam. One who believes in *monarchia* is pious, even though ignorance is a threat as Peter says in his discourse in Tripolis:

> For all the deceitful conceptions against the monarchy are sown in your mind by him [Simon] to your hurt. First, that you may not hear the discourses of piety, and so drive away ignorance, which is the occasion of evils, he ensnares you by a pretence of knowledge, [...]. Wherefore also some, being thus deceived, are not willing to hear, that they may be ignorant, not knowing that ignorance is of itself a sufficient deadly drug. For if anyone should take a deadly drug in ignorance, does he not die? So naturally sins destroy the sinner, though he commit them in ignorance of what is right (10.12–13).

When taken together with *Hom.* 3.4, there seems to be a certain tension: being ignorant of the original, monarchic state, people are tested for anti-monarchic viewpoints.

3. *Poetics for the 'Implied Reader' of the Novel. The Existential Act of Reading*

There is something more to say about the motif of deception and its role of testing the *gentile* audience. A curious link occurs between the audiences within the novel and an *ideal readership* as discussed by Peter. In the disputes between Peter and Simon a certain *reading strategy* for a particular *ideal reader* is discussed and connected to the motifs of deception and God's testing of this 'reader'. Simon and Peter often debate on how to determine what is true in the Old Testament: the so-called theory of the *false pericopes*. In general, the *Homilies* hold a negative view towards the written record of oral teaching.[77] Jesus and Peter present a specific reading

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[77] Of course, there is also tension concerning Clement's written version of the disputes and doctrines of Peter (in the form of the *Pseudo-Clementines*). Amsler (2014b, p. 185) notes: 'Once the transition from orality to writing is accomplished, the written word is submitted to a control that prevents it from becoming an autonomous object. Writing supports oral transmission rather than supplants it. [...] The oral transmission from master to disciple remains the point of reference and the Pseudo-Clementine romance upholds the primacy of the spoken word across the generations, using the written word only as an auxiliary'.

strategy for these passages.[78] It is in fact simple and rational: one always has to choose the more reverential position and to filter out the opposite passages, especially when the *monarchia*, the benevolence and the providence of the one God are contested (19.8). As the True Prophet had put it: one has to be a 'money-changer' in this particular deliberation (2.51, 3.50, 18.20).[79] These false passages ended up in the Scriptures because of human fallibility. But, moreover, God consciously let these passages be preserved as a kind of test for the reader/listener who lacks true insight, who does not perform true worship and who is not able to see through the deceptive, false passages. In a similar vein, Jesus stated that anyone who seeks salvation must become 'a judge of the books' which were written to 'test' people (2.51, 3.50).

> [...] I shall show that God foreknows. But it has been proved that the opinion is false that He does not know, and that this was written to try us. Thus we, Simon, can be led astray neither by the Scriptures nor by anyone else; nor are we deceived into the admission of many gods, nor do we agree to any statement that is made against God (16.13).

The piety, *politeia* and *monarchia* of the *gentile* audience within the story was tested. In two respects, the same happens on the level of the reader. The first reader is the intended reader of the authoritative, Old Testament as explained by Peter. *Monarchia* plays a crucial role in the act of reading. The false passages reveal

[78] Peter is worried that such a theory would confuse the public, and therefore wants to keep it within his own rank (*Hom.* 2.39). Simon, however, makes this attempt impossible by referring multiple times to such pericopes (3.39–58). The origin of the theory has been fiercely discussed in modern scholarship, just as the fact that it does not appear in the *Recognitions*. See Strecker 1981, p. 162–63 and Shuve 2008 and 2018, passim.

[79] In this image of the True Prophet as the one who offers the true reading of the Scriptures, two important elements of Early Christianity come together. On the one hand, there is the charismatic presence of prophets and prophecies, on the other, the systematisation of doctrines and the restriction of charismatic teachings such as those of so-called prophets (see Bazzana 2012). One can see both elements in the *Clementines*: the charismatic presence of the Prophet in the background, in the past, and the standardisation of his teachings by Peter (who does not change a word) and his followers, among them Clement. Bazzana 2012, p. 29–31 sees this as 'a sign of the archaic character of this entire [Clementine] system', but it fits in with the third-fourth century since the *Clementines* consciously portray the performance of the Prophet in the past.

the ones who are not reading with the right disposition and who believe those deceptive falsehoods about God (2.41.3–42.2). Peter declares that these scriptures are in fact *tupoi*, which can be moulded into one's own interpretation (3.10.4 and 16.9.4). The reader reads theological points of view in those *tupoi*, which determine their 'waxen' disposition or *proairesis*. If this *proairesis* is right, 'monarchic', then one really knows the Scriptures and God. If not, it reveals one's wrong disposition: the act of reading, just as in the case of the *gentile* audience, is existential. It is a test, it can be deceiving, and it shows *gentiles* who they are. The outstanding example is of course Simon Magus himself as one can read in *Hom*. 2.22.3: 'The things of the law he explains [*allegorises*] by his own presumption'.[80]

The same is said about another kind of audience, the *ideal recipient* of Peter's teachings, which can be equated with the discourses as they are written down by Clement. We already meet this 'reader' of Peter's teachings in the *Letter from Peter to James*:[81]

> [...], I beg and beseech you not to communicate to any one of the Gentiles the books of my preachings which I sent to you, nor to any one of our own tribe *before trial*; but if anyone has been proved and found worthy, then to commit them to him, after the manner in which Moses delivered his books to the Seventy who succeeded to his chair (§ 1).

Peter's proclamation of the True Prophet's teaching is only meant for those who are considered worthy, as was the case with the *gentile* public. One of the dangers Peter refers to can be linked to the *tupoi*, namely the 'sinewy' and 'polysemous' quality of the Scriptures (τῶν πολλὰ νευρουσῶν γραφῶν, § 1.3, τὰς τῶν προφητῶν πολυσήμους φωνάς, § 1.5).[82] He compares his own teaching to those of Moses and the way Jews live even in his own time: Jews cannot

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[80] 'τὰ δὲ τοῦ νόμου ἰδίᾳ **προλήψει** ἀλληγορεῖ'.

[81] The *Letter* is one of three introductory documents. It has Peter to inform James about his mission. The second, the so-called *Diamarturia*, tells about James reading Peter's letter to the group of elders with further instructions about the initiation rite. The third is a letter from Clement to James in which he explains how he became Peter's successor and how he was instructed to write down Peter's teachings and to send them to James.

[82] See also Carlson 2013, p. 17.

be led astray by the 'sinewy' quality of the Scriptures. This quality has the ability to generate several interpretations of the same passage and is therefore dangerous for the uninitiated. This comparison also has the consequence that Peter defines his own teachings as dangerous for the uninitiated audience. This image of the *ideal recipient* of the teachings of Peter, triggers of course another 'reader': the *implied reader* of the *Homilies*. The *implied reader* is a 'network of response-inviting structures, which impel the [*actual*] reader to grasp the text'.[83] This is a set of formal and rhetorical textual data that establishes contact with the actual reader. It wants to take the reader by the hand in an expectation pattern the author has in mind of how the reader should deal with the text.

First of all, the *implied reader* is placed in relation to the *Homilistic* story between James, who already knows everything and has to authorise Clement's report, and an initiate, since the *implied reader* is seemingly given privilege to continue without being put on trial. This *implied reader* is also connected to the *ideal reader* of the Old Testament. Both have to possess the rule of *monarchia* and *politeia*, as Peter again compares his teachings with those of Moses:

> For his [Moses] countrymen keep the same rule of *monarchy* and *polity* everywhere, being unable in any way to think otherwise, or to be led out of the way of the much-indicating Scriptures. For, according to the rule delivered to them, they endeavour to correct the discordances of the Scriptures, if any one, haply not knowing the traditions, is confounded at the various utterances of the prophets. Wherefore they charge no one to teach, unless he has first learned how the Scriptures must be used. And thus they have amongst them one God, one law, one hope (§ 1).

This way, the *implied reader* (the privileged role which the actual reader receives) and the *ideal reader* of the Scripture are connected in the sense that both have to read in a true way with a truthful disposition. Moreover, on some occasions in the novel itself, metafictional reflections indicate that the *implied reader* should interpret the teachings and deeds of Peter (i.e. the *Homilistic* account) in a 'true' way. This connection between the two

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[83] Iser 1995, p. 34.

'readers' and the existential act of reading could explain the choice for the novelistic framework, as we also know from the *Greek novels* which are filled with cases of (reading through) deceptions. A meta-literary reflection can be found in 15.2. During the discussions with Peter in Laodicea, it becomes clear that the deceived Faustus literally misinterprets the events of his life by ascribing these events to fate or astrological determinism. He believes that his wife indeed did commit adultery as his brother deceivingly had told him. However, as Peter indicates before giving his interpretation of Faustus' life: the latter's interpretation of his life will turn out to be a fictitious story (μῦθόν τινα ψευδῆ). Not only does the 'gentile' Faustus interpret his life, but this is also a metafictional marker for the reader of course, about how to truly read Faustus' life. Moreover, it is also noteworthy that Mattidia, when still unrecognized by Peter and his students and asked by Peter to tell her life story, she deceives Peter out of shame of her current role as a beggar (12.19.4). For example, she does not give away that her lost husband was a Roman, but a Sicilian, just like in the novel of Chariton's *Callirhoe and Chaereas*.[84] This is again a meta-literary reflection. The implied reader has to 'read' through Mattidia's act of deception and has to recognize the meta-literary game in the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Faustus too—when still unrecognized—deceives Peter by presenting the story he tells as actually that of a friend, who eventually died of a broken heart in Seleucia. This deception of Faustus is peculiar to the *Homilies* and is absent in the *Recognitions*.[85] Reading through the deceptions and misleading cases is an act of existential initiation and confirmation as a reader—in this case, a *pepaideumenos*. It is connected to the fact that reading in itself, according to the *Homilies*, can also be an act of deception and testing in the sense that one has to interpret in a true way. As deceptions are essential for the act of reading the Old Testament in a correct way, they are part of that larger 'network of response-inviting structures, which impel the [*actual*] reader to grasp the text' as the function of the *implied reader* was explained.

[84] For a brief discussion of this passage and the comparison with *Callirhoe and Chaereas*, Salač 1959.

[85] The setting of the recognition of the father in *Rec.* 9.32 is different from the *Homilistic* version, and does not deploy an act of deception from the part of the father.

Deceptions and the act of reading are intrinsically linked in the *Homilies*. In this way, the *novelistic framework* is not only a literary one or *l'art pour l'art*,[86] but also an existential, related to the act of reading.

There is, moreover, a disruption between the *gentile* audiences in the novel and the *implied reader* of the novel. As the first group is expected to be totally ignorant of the (Jewish-)Christian, 'true doctrine', the second, the reader, is not. The novel contains quotes or implicit references to and reinterpretations of passages in the New Testament which are expected to be understood by the reader of the novel.[87] The *implied reader* is expected to have affinities with this kind of background and already to have surpassed the stage of 'initiation' as is mentioned in the introductory letters. They are more than *ignorant gentiles*. The *Homilies* intend to be an elaboration on this background, unifying the Christian and Jewish identities and giving 'true knowledge' about the doctrines of the *false pericopes* or the *syzygiae*. This solves the abovementioned paradox: while the *gentile* public is intended to be ignorant of the original, monarchic state, they are tested for anti-monarchic viewpoints which is, in fact, an indicator for the *implied (ex-)gentile reader* in the footsteps of Peter. The reader is forced to think about the role of his background in Greek *paideia* and the relationship with the Christian discourse, in particular, concerning the motifs of tests, deception and dissimulation.

4. *Conclusion*

Reading the *Pseudo-Clementines* is an existential act of reading and interpreting for several audiences. The motifs of deception and dissimulation that blur the boundaries between 'truth' and 'untruth' play an important role. The opponents are characterised as deceptive and their epistemological methods are connected to several late ancient forms of knowledge: magic, astrology and

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[86] According to Hägg (1991, p. 164), the novelistic form was only meant to attract pagan readers. In the same (sometimes very negative) line, also Trenkner 1958, p. 101 and Szepessy 1985–1988, p. 362.

[87] For a discussion on the role of the quotes of the New Testament in the Clementines, see Nes 1887 and Kline 1975. For an extensive discussion of the reinterpretations of passages from the New Testament, see Duncan 2017.

Greek *paideia*, including rhetoric, mythology and philosophy. This is connected with a theological theory, the *syzygiae*, according to which the opponents stand in the line of false, female prophetess. Interestingly, the *Homilies* uses the principle of *dissimulation*, feigning ignorance, in order to counter-attack opponents.

Secondly, I looked at the intended audience within the novel and how they have to deal with deceiving and dissimulating contestants. The *Homilies* supported the theory that deceptions on a theological level are a part of God's plan. They are tools for testing people, more precisely, *gentiles*.

Lastly, I have shown how the *Homilies* consciously link several audiences: the audience in the novel, the *ideal reader* of the Old Testament, and the *implied reader* of the novel. The *Homilies*, more than the *Recognitions*, emphatically connect the motifs of deception and dissimulation to the several intended audiences and readers. And they do so by connecting this motif of deception and the reader with the literary choice of a *romance of recognitions* in which deceptions play an important role. This literary framework is more than *l'art pour l'art*. It offers a well-thought link between all these layers of the motif of deception. The connection between deception and the reader/audience goes further than just a poetics of the reader, it is placed in an ontological, epistemological and soteriological framework. All three audiences are expected to be readers with a *gentile* background who are to be tested concerning the true knowledge. Deception and discourses of 'fake news' have a purpose. The *Homilies* uniquely deal with the opposition between truth and lies, and the concept of 'functional lie/deception' by using Greek rhetoric combined with elements from (Jewish-)Christian traditions.

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Abstract

The *Pseudo-Clementines*, the only surviving (Jewish-)Christian novel from third-fourth century Syria, offer us an autobiographical story of the young Clement of Rome and his search for true knowledge in a strongly polemical world. During his search, he comes across various epistemological methods to attain a certain kind of knowledge such as magic, astrology, and Greek paideia which includes mythology, rhetoric, and philosophy. However, these epistemological forms fail and are rejected in the *Pseudo-Clementines* as discourses of deceptive, 'Fake News'. They do not and cannot offer any truth. Only one kind of knowledge counts as the truth: that of God and the so-called True Prophet. This network of different forms of knowledge is the subject of heavy debates in many disputes and rivalries between Peter and Simon Magus, and Clement and Appion. This contribution will analyse two

important motifs for this search and contest for truth: deception and dissimulation. The intended *gentile* audiences are specifically troubled by these motifs: they find it hard to see and discover the truth. As the True Prophet claims in the *Pseudo-Clementines*: 'The truth does not lie on the surface' (*Hom*. 3.52). The analysis in this first part deals with the narrative and theological-historiographical level. Secondly, this article shows how these motifs link, on the one hand, the role of the different audiences/readers within the novel and with the *implied reader* of the novel itself, and, on the other hand, the content of the novel with the literary, novelistic framework.

PETER GEMEINHARDT

POLEMICS AND NETWORKING IN FOURTH-CENTURY TRINITARIAN DEBATES

ATHANASIUS' WRITINGS FROM HIS THIRD EXILE REVISITED *

1. *Introduction. Networks, Polemics, and the Construction of Orthodoxy*

Let me begin by introducing a man who is known, so to speak, as a single-hander within the stormy sea of doctrinal debates in the fourth century AD. Soon after his death in 373, Athanasius of Alexandria was being venerated as an icon of orthodoxy, an uncompromising bishop, whose adherence to the Nicene faith did not waver although he was forced into exile five times, the last man standing when 'the world groaned and was astonished to find itself Arian', as Jerome famously exclaimed.[1] In later historiographical and hagiographical perception, Athanasius simply was the man who fought alone *contra mundum*.[2]

There are however different opinions concerning Athanasius' behaviour and achievement during the trinitarian debates: in a recent biography of the Alexandrian bishop, the German historian Manfred Clauss stated that Athanasius' contribution to the

[1] Jerome, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* 19 (CCSL 79B, 48.688–89 Canellis): *Ingemuit totus orbis, et Arianum se esse miratus est*. Trans. Fremantle 1893, p. 329.

[2] See Gwynn 2012, p. 49.

solution of the trinitarian question was confined to 'unrestrained polemics and defamation of anyone who did not share his opinion as "Arian" who well deserved the hatred of upright Christians'.[3] This might be exaggerated but echoes the judgment of Eduard Schwartz who reckoned Athanasius 'a true politician who is not able to tell stories but only to polemicize'.[4] Whether this holds true for politicians then and now should not bother us here. For the purpose of the present paper, I want to begin with Athanasius' fame as a gifted polemicist and relate this well-known aspect of his writings to the question of networks which has not yet been applied to his case.[5] This notion may help to overcome established stereotypes of Athanasius in particular or of the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century in general. I will argue that Athanasius created networks on different levels, polemically referring to his sworn enemies, the 'Arians', 'Eusebians', and 'Melitians'. But he was also eager to establish his own network of pro-Nicene bishops,[6] that is, of orthodox supporters on earth and even in heaven. What appears to be several learned networks, formally comparable, but distinguished by the correct or erroneous type of learning which they were based upon, was tied together by reference to synods and individuals as authorities. While I do certainly not intend to apply to Athanasius' writings a 'social network analysis' in tune with current sociological research—which would

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[3] Clauss 2016, p. 8: 'Sein Beitrag zu der theologischen Auseinandersetzung in der langen Zeit, in der er sein Amt innehatte, war die hemmungslose Polemik, die Diffamierung aller, die nicht seiner Meinung waren, als "Arianer"; diese verdienten allen Hass der aufrechten Christen'.

[4] Schwartz 1959, p. 1: 'Er ist ein echter Politiker auch darin, daß er nicht erzählen, sondern nur polemisieren kann'.

[5] I thereby follow up earlier research on bishops as mentors in spiritual networks (Gemeinhardt 2019).

[6] A note on terminology: the notion of 'pro-Nicene' theology has been proposed by Ayres 2004, p. 236–40 in order to avoid the traditional divide between 'old-' and 'neo-Nicenes' or the like. Concerning the period between 362 and 381 (and, for the Latin west, even beyond; see Gemeinhardt 1999), I would be inclined to maintain the latter distinction, since in the aftermath of the synod of Alexandria (362) and based on Athanasius' *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, a new consensus began to emerge which may appropriately be termed 'neunizänisch' (even if there were several 'Nicene orthodoxies', see Gemeinhardt 2006). For the period under consideration here, the 350s, 'pro-Nicene' seems in order since only slowly bishops came to refer affirmatively to the synod of Nicaea and even with greater hesitation to the Nicene Creed and the ὁμοούσιος.

be impossible because of the lack of appropriate data[7]—, I will refer to Mark Granovetter's suggestive image of 'the strength of weak ties'.[8] Which ties connect communications and negotiations between bishops, theologians, and emperors in a highly fluid and competitive situation, as we face it in the 350s AD? Granovetter's approach soon became highly influential in the discussion of social networks. Defining interpersonal ties as 'strong' (high-level of interaction, e.g., friends), 'weak' (low-level of interaction, e.g., acquaintances) and 'absent', Granovetter identified the weak ties as responsible for the transmission of information to a larger number of people than those accessible via strong ties. Additionally, the information that flows through weak ties traverses greater social distance and is more novel than that diffused by strong ties. This sociological model was designed to analyse huge arrays of quantitative data. I would however claim that the dialectic of strength and weakness also works for qualitative analysis of social ties between individuals and groups, all the more since it allows for a precise description of the fluidity and interchangeability of those networks which are under consideration here. And while Athanasius certainly had strong ties to some friends one whom he could rely, like Serapion of Thmuis, it was clearly his intention to communicate his view of the developments of the 350s—and most importantly, his self-depiction as an innocent victim of imperial violence—to many people who had never met him personally or cultivated only weak ties to him. Thus, we should overcome the traditional view of clear-cut 'parties' and pay closer attention to the manifold networks which emerged—and disappeared—in a short span of time.

Doing so does not mean to put new wine into old wineskins (Matt. 9.17). The notion of networks is promising for a fresh approach to people, opinions, and events which have for a long time been crucial to what in German is called *Dogmengeschichte*. There are lots of books and papers on Athanasius and his contemporaries, their careers, and alliances. It has long become clear

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[7] Social Network Theory has been tested with respect to clerics in exile in Late Antiquity (see Hillner 2016, p. 24–42) and is discussed in view of different fields of episcopal agency in Cvetković & Gemeinhardt 2019.

[8] Granovetter 1973. For the applicability of this model to studies in Late Antiquity, see Cvetković & Gemeinhardt 2019, p. 4.

that there was not one single 'orthodox' teaching on the Trinity as opposed to an obvious 'heretical' one. Instead, the outcome of the debates of the fourth century was the result of negotiations, polemics, politics, and a long debate on the appropriate criteria of theological thought and speech. What has, as it appears to me, not yet been sufficiently investigated are, on the one hand, the institutional factors, whose investigation I must leave for another occasion, and, on the other hand, the means by which doctrinal affiliations were established and plausibilised, which will be under scrutiny here. Here, networks make their appearance: why do people side with each other, which ties bind them together so that they keep up their allegiance when the wind changes, and how do they align with others and create new ties?

This is not to deny that doctrinal positions played any role in these processes of creating networks. It has however become clear that sharp-cut distinctions like 'homousian', 'homoiusian', 'homoian' or 'anhomoian' (as they continue to figure in German textbooks) do not sufficiently mirror the theological, ecclesiastical, and political options of the 350s and beyond, not to speak of an 'Arian' party which never existed in the strict sense. Therefore, I want to re-read well-known texts from Athanasius and his contemporaries as attempts to create networks by way of polemicising against their rivals, may this be on doctrinal, juridical, or simply personal grounds. In a first section, that forms the main part of my paper, I will examine the polemical creation of hostile networks in selected writings of Athanasius from his third exile which are an excellent case in point (2.).[9] In the next two sections, I will widen the perspective to other kinds of networks, that were negotiated in the course of the fourth century, first with special attention to the intellectual dimension and the quest for normative Fathers (3.); second, I will introduce Athanasius' network with deceased saints and living martyrs-to-be (4.).[10] In the fourth century, not

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[9] Basic information on Athanasius' life, career, and writings can be found in various entries in Gemeinhardt 2011a; see ibid., p. 465–67 for a list of abbreviations of Athanasius' writings which are used in the present paper. Translations are taken from Robertson 1987, without marking minor modifications.

[10] For Athanasius as a living martyr, see also Heil 2018, p. 180: Athanasius 'was a kind of *new bishop* with his self-estimation as teacher and martyr [...] His spiritual and ecclesiastical authority relies on the aura of martyrdom. Therefore,

only the testimony of the Fathers became popular but also the appeal to a 'heavenly network', knit by blood and faith.[11]

One last introductory remark: it should be clear by now that I am mainly interested in the *construction* of networks by Athanasius and others, not in networks as an empirical reality. In the present paper, with the term 'network' I refer to Athanasius' *claims* to orthodox or heretical networks, that is, I argue on a *discursive* level. There are however situations where such a discursive construction converges with concrete political or ecclesiastical action—e.g., the deposition of Athanasius by the synod of Tyre (335) is well attested in the sources, not only in the bishop's imagination. In should however be kept in mind that none other than Athanasius himself provides the main sources for his story; thus, while his account may be historical reliable in many aspects, it is still *his* story which he tells. In other words, we can observe the creation of horizontal and vertical networks, whose strength and weakness in reality was open to rapid change, but who also contributed to perceptions and transformations of the current situation. In this sense, networks of orthodoxies can be regarded as means of (re-) constructing reality but also as shaping reality, that is, they are constructive as well as performative.

2. *Athanasius' 'Contra mundum'. The Polemical Creation of Hostile Networks*

Let us start with a bishop whose career had recently hit bottom. Since the early 350s, relationships between Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria and metropolitan of Egypt and Libya, and the emperor Constantius had dramatically deteriorated.[12] Athanasius had refused to accept his deposition by the synods of Arles (353) and Milan (355). In February 356, Constantius ordered soldiers to occupy the Theonas Church in Alexandria and imprison

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not only the monks follow the footsteps of the former martyrs, but he himself as bishop'.

[11] With regard to Athanasius' constructions of his enemies, Gwynn 2007, p. 9 has noted that they 'must be approached through the examination of the content, methodology, and motivation of his polemic, and of the development of that polemical construction across his various works'.

[12] For the historical background, see Barnes 1993, p. 109–20.

the bishop. Athanasius managed to escape through the backdoor and fled to the Egyptian desert.[13] Not before 362 could he return to Alexandria. Later, pious legend had it that he spent some of his exile hidden by a virgin inside the city.[14] Whether this is a historical fact may be doubted: Athanasius himself reports in his *Apology to Constantius* that, after his flight, he dwelt in the desert.[15] It remains however interesting that Palladius who is our earliest witness to this story mentions that the virgin assisted him by 'obtaining the loan of books for his use'.[16] There was obviously a need to explain how Athanasius managed to produce a multitude of writings to defend his cause and refer to many other writers as well as to synodal and imperial documents while being cut off from any ecclesiastical support.

In these treatises, we can observe the deliberate creation of hostile networks. They were part and parcel of his account of an 'Arian controversy'.[17] Here, I will refer mainly to the *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* and the *History of the Arians*, both most probably written in mid- or late 357.[18] It is not clear to whom Athanasius addressed the *History of the Arians*, since the beginning is missing in the manuscript tradition, but there can be no doubt that, according to the author, the world is basically divided into two groups, and these are constituted by ties of loy-

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[13] These events are narrated in Athanasius, *fug.* 24.3–6 (Athanasius Werke [hereafter quoted: AW] II, 84.10–85.4 Opitz, with the editor's note on p. 84) and *apol. Const.* 25.4 (AW II, 298.14–21 Brennecke et al.). The letter of his followers to emperor Constantius (by which the faithful protested against this action) tells a less heroic story of the bishop (quoted in *h. Ar.* 81.8; AW II, 229.25–30 Opitz). See Gwynn 2012, p. 44.

[14] Palladius, *Historia lausiaca* 63.2–3 (FC 67, 312.5–20 Hübner).

[15] Athanasius, *apol. Const*. 27.2; 32.1; 34.2 (AW II, 300.14–16; 305.28–306.2; 308.1–2 Opitz). Since this text was finalised in 357 at the latest, it does not principally contradict a later sojourn in the city which is attested, e.g., by the Syriac *Index to the Festal Letters* (no. 30 for the year 358; SC 317, p. 259 Martin & Albert).

[16] Palladius, *Historia lausiaca* 63.3 (FC 67, 312.18 Hübner): βιβλία κιχρωμένη καὶ παρέχουσα αὐτῷ. Trans. Meyer 1965, p. 145.

[17] See Gwynn 2012, p. 45.

[18] For introductory information to these writings, see Portmann 2011 and Heil 2011; for the historical background, Martin 1996, p. 474–518, Gwynn 2012, p. 43–49, and Clauss 2016, p. 151–62 (as mentioned above, a biased and therefore problematic account). Athanasius' first writing from exile, his *Epistula encyclica* (written in 339), is briefly discussed in Barry 2016, p. 253–55.

alty to two individuals: Athanasius and the emperor Constantius with their respective networks of supporters. The bishop depicts himself as victim of imperial persecution and thus as a successor of the early Christian martyrs and the biblical saints:

> For Elijah also was alone in his persecution, and God was all in all to the holy man. And the Saviour has given us an example herein, who also was left alone, and exposed to the designs of His enemies, to teach us, that when we are persecuted and deserted by men, we must not faint, but place our hope in Him, and not betray the Truth.[19]

Athanasius, without false modesty, aligns himself with the prophet Elijah who was threatened by the king of Israel, Ahab (I Reg. 17.1–9), and the Lord Jesus Christ whom his disciples left when Roman soldiers approached him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26.56). Thus, in his narrative, Athanasius draws a clear distinction between the single witness of the truth and the persecutor who, of course, disposes of powerful troops and agents.[20] But the latter is, if one takes a closer look, only the instrument of others—Ahab serves the prophets of Baal and Asherah, Pontius Pilate is manipulated by the Jewish priests, and Constantius acts upon insinuations by *Eusebius and his fellows* (οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον),[21] as Athanasius termed his actual opponents. Less frequently, he uses the notion of *Arius and his fellows* (οἱ περὶ Ἄρειον); in most cases, he speaks of *Arians* (Ἀρειανοί) or, even more polemically, *Ariomanites* (Ἀρειομανῖται).[22] It is crucial to Athanasius' argument

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[19] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 47.3 (AW II, 210.26–29 Opitz): μόνος γὰρ ἦν καὶ Ἠλίας διωκόμενος καὶ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ἦν ὁ θεὸς τῷ ἁγίῳ. καὶ τοῦτον δὲ τύπον δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ μόνος καταλειφθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπεβουλεύετο, ἵνα, κἂν ἡμεῖς διωκόμενοι καταλειφθῶμεν ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων, μὴ ἐκκακῶμεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔχωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὴν ἐλπίδα καὶ μὴ προδίδωμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 287–88.

[20] Cf. Flower 2013, p. 128: 'Throughout his *History of the Arians*, Athanasius consistently portrayed himself as exceptionally important to both the orthodox and the heretics. He was the hero of his own story; the entire narrative revolved around his actions and those taken because of him'.

[21] This expression is attested for the first time in Alexander of Alexandria's *Encyclical Letter to All Bishops* (Urk. 4b Opitz = Dok. 2.2 Brennecke et al.; AW III.1.1, 8.13 Opitz). Whether Athanasius is the author of this letter is 'far from impossible' but cannot be proven (Gwynn 2007, p. 66).

[22] The notion of οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον is frequently attested in Athanasius' writings of the 350s; among the writings under scrutiny here, it should suffice to hint at

to evoke the impression of a more or less stable group of enemies who adhere to a leading figure, be it 'Arius who first ventured to blaspheme openly' (but who had died in 336) or 'Eusebius who took upon him the leadership of this enterprise'.[23] Interestingly, Athanasius differentiates between the author of the 'Arian heresy' and the organiser of its distribution and stabilisation. While both aspects are intrinsically interconnected, the actual threat was exerted by the 'Eusebians'. Although both Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia had also died years ago (around 340), it was the generation of their immediate followers who were active against Athanasius. In his presentation of his own cause, he sets himself in the succession of persecuted prophets and believers.

Thereby, we can observe by which means he constructs an image of the ongoing struggles: the actual theological question is the subordination of the Son or Logos to God the Father within the divine realm, combined with the problem of the pre-existence of the Son or Logos which Arius, at least to a certain degree, had denied, as far as the relationship of Father and Son was involved.[24] In this sense, according to Athanasius, the 'Eusebians' and their present heirs—namely Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa—are simply called 'Arians' or 'Ariomanites' (or Χριστομάχοι, 'those who contend against Christ'), since it is unbelievable for Athanasius that any rational human being could be so misled in his thinking about God. Already in his *Orations against the Arians*, written in the first half of the 340s,[25] Athanasius had made his point against Arius, Asterius, and Eusebius of Caesarea, elaborating upon the condemnation of the synod of Nicaea against anyone who teaches that 'there was a time when

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h. Ar. 9.1; 11.2; 15.1; 19.2; 50.2. οἱ περὶ Ἄρειον is only mentioned in passing, e.g., in *h. Ar.* 1.1, while Athanasius speaks in innumerous places of Ἀρειανοί or, more pointedly, of Ἀρειομανῖται (e.g., *h. Ar.* 39.2). Athanasius' polemical reference to οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον appears for the first time in the *Encyclical Letter* of 339 (see Gwynn 2007, p. 51–57), the earliest polemical treatise which can be ascribed to him with certainty (notwithstanding the question of the authorship of Alexander's *Encyclical Letter*).

[23] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 66.2 (AW II, 219.14–15 Opitz): καὶ ὁ μὲν Ἄρειος τὴν τοῦ βλασφημεῖν ἐκ φανεροῦ τόλμην ἀνεδέξατο, ὁ δὲ Εὐσέβιος τὴν ταύτης προστασίαν (my translation).

[24] See, e.g., Ayres 2004, p. 54–56, and Löhr 2011, p. 57–58.

[25] For the literary, theological, and historical background, see Vinzent 2011.

he (sc. the Son) did not exist' or that 'before begotten he did not exist' or that he came into being 'from non-existence'.[26] Substantially, his refutation of the 'Arians' would remain the same until the end of the 350s when the Nicene *homousios* came again to the fore and eventually took centre stage.

While the development of Athanasius' trinitarian theology is a highly interesting matter itself,[27] I am for the time being more interested in the view of his opponents as a network. Here, the aspect of 'leadership' (προστασία) which he ascribes to Eusebius is telling. Arius' heresy had not vanished with the heretic's death because it had undergone a kind of institutionalisation. Therefore, in Athanasius' view, the astonishing success of 'Arianism' is not due to sound theological reasoning but to clever boundary-making against the followers of Nicaea, supported by imperial coercion and violence. Thus, Athanasius operates by way of creating groups with certain labels, like the 'Ariomanites'. It is the latter notion which nicely encompasses the three topics in the title of the present volume: without doubt, Athanasius 'polemicises' against other theologians whom he reckons his 'rivals', and he does so by depicting them as a 'network'. The latter appears as an identifiable group or even as a kind of school with Arius as school-head and Eusebius or Ursacius and Valens respectively as his successors who, after the death of Arius, had taken care of the coherence of the group's view of God and of the oppression of other theological opinions. In other words, Athanasius constructs a network of bishops and theologians who are connected by their adherence to Arius' teaching and by their joint action to silence their rivals from the Nicene camp. One could even term this a *learned network*, since it is defined by a theological doctrine and stabilised by hierarchical relationships of episcopal teachers and pupils.

But unfortunately, their learning is void, since the 'Arian' doctrine of God and Christ has to be reckoned heretical from the outset, while Athanasius' own and his fellow bishops' teaching always

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[26] Text: Kinzig 2017, I, p. 290 (§ 135c).

[27] For Athanasius' trinitarian theology and its development, see the short but lucid account of Ritter 2011 and the extensive systematic treatment by Morales 2006; also Anatolios 1998, p. 85–163 is instructive.

was in tune with the Scriptures as interpreted by the Nicene synod. While he speaks time and again of *Eusebius and his fellows* (οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον), he and his followers only rarely figure as *Athanasius and his fellows* (οἱ περὶ Ἀθανάσιον) or *Athanasius and those with him* (Ἀθανάσιος καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ).[28] Like Paul in I Cor. 1.12–17, Athanasius argues that a doctrine which is tied to the name of a human teacher is indicative of its erroneousness in itself, since faith does not depend on human beings but on the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Accordingly, he contrasts 'those who think like Arius' and 'those who are zealous about the truth'[29] (the latter expression, of course, referring to his own network); sometimes he bluntly claims that the heretics took action 'against the Christians'.[30] In the *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, Athanasius straightforwardly states that 'we are Christians and not Arians'.[31] Of course, this is an extremely biased account, all the more since the author goes at some lengths to prove that his opponents' network is tied together by imperial coercion. As Athanasius reports, Constantius had forced many bishops to speak out in public: 'We will no longer hold communion with Athanasius'![32] Only a few bishops resisted this pressure and, consequently, were exiled in order to isolate the bishop of Alexandria.[33]

The obvious fluidity of these oppositions—which were constantly re-shaped in the course of events and their reflection by Athanasius and others—is the main reason why we should address these groups, parties, or schools as 'networks'. In my opinion, this notion helps to highlight a crucial observation: while it is clear that these 'Arians' in a strict sense existed as a clear-cut group only in Athanasius' mind and writings, so to speak, as scholarly fiction, there was actually a lot of networking since the 330s, resulting in the exchange of letters and theological treatises on the

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[28] The first notion is found in *h. Ar.* 15.1 and 16.1, the second in *h. Ar.* 18.1.

[29] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 3.5 (AW II, 219.14–15 Opitz): οἱ τὰ Ἀρείου φρονοῦντες—οἱ τῆς ἀληθείας ζηλωταί.

[30] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 31.4 (AW II, 200.14 Opitz).

[31] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 20.3 (AW I.1.1, 61.1 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): Χριστιανοὶ γάρ ἐσμεν καὶ οὐκ Ἀρειανοί.

[32] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 32.2 (AW II, 200.29–30 Opitz): οὐκέτι κοινωνοῦμεν Ἀθανασίῳ. Trans. Robertson, 1987, p. 280.

[33] For exiled clerics, see now Hillner et al. 2016.

one hand and in the summoning of synods on the other. Thus the question arises how to reconcile fictionality and factuality, the deliberate construction of an allied front of the enemies in written treatises and letters and the concrete actions of individuals: their groupings were by far not as stable as Athanasius suggests but they undoubtedly gathered physically and took action against him and his few followers. They did so, however, with a variety of motives, not all of them being based on sober elaborations of trinitarian doctrine. As long as one asks for doctrinal opinions as reliable markers of identity, it remains difficult to assess the coherence of these groups, and the same is true for consent to or rejection of imperial action. In the 350s, such groupings were highly dynamic, but still they did not come out of thin air: instead, there were people active in establishing, stabilising, and renewing ties between bishops, free-lance theologians, state officials, and emperors, ties which could be strengthened and weakened by political action and synodical decisions and which only slowly came to be connected to theological teachings. They could be termed 'brokers of loyalties', and Athanasius was one of them: he had to secure his own network which appeared extremely weak after he himself had been driven out of Alexandria and many of his supporters had been forced into exile.

Due to this aim, he mentions the 'letters of peace' which Ursacius and Valens had exchanged with him ten years before [34] in order to point out who disturbed the prevailing unanimity between the legitimate bishops and he stresses the harmony and peace between him and 400 bishops of all parts of the Roman empire which had supported him after the synod of Serdica (343) which should have restored the peace in the Church.[35] But now, 'wherever there is a pious person and a lover of Christ (and there are many such everywhere, as were the prophets and the great Elijah), they hide themselves'.[36]

Following up this self-identification with Elijah, Athanasius possessed a *hidden network*, consisting of upright Christians who

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[34] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 26.1, 5 (AW II, 197.5–6, 21–22 Opitz).

[35] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 28.2 (AW II, 198.5–13 Opitz).

[36] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 53.2 (AW II, 213.27–29 Opitz): εἰ γὰρ καί πού τίς ἐστιν εὐσεβὴς καὶ φιλόχριστος (εἰσὶ δὲ πανταχοῦ πολλοὶ τοιοῦτοι ὡς οἱ προφῆται καὶ Ἡλίας ὁ μέγας), κρύπτονται. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 289.

were concealed in the desert, like himself, or driven into exile, but in any case not able to take political action right now. The weakness of this network is however not so precarious as it seems at first glance, as Athanasius points out. Constantius had sent the remaining confessors to different places, inspired by his savage reasoning

> that bodily separation can disunite also the affections of the mind, and that being severed from each other, they would forget the concord and unanimity which existed among them.[37]

By doing so, as Athanasius ironically remarks, the emperor himself helped to spread the news of his impious cruelty all over the world, since the exiled bishops did not cease to confess and preach the true faith. According to Athanasius, the Nicene network was not destroyed by this punishment but even strengthened and enlarged.

Given his desperate situation in 357, this is a bold claim: Athanasius suggested that he was still accompanied by many followers and acknowledged all over the Christian world, against all odds, so to speak. The reason for this unexpected survival of the threatened Nicene party is crucial to the Athanasian perception of an *orthodox* network: they who were exiled and separated by the emperor had before 'spoken boldly and confessed together' and were 'united by faith'.[38] This joint confession of the faith turned out to be stronger than physical separation: it enabled the bishops to stay in communion with each other and, most importantly from his point of view, with Athanasius himself. This can be illustrated by a look at the vocabulary of his treatises from the third exile. The *History of the Arians* is interlaced with the Greek word κοινωνία ('communion') and its derivatives, positive (the bishops of given regions have communion with Athanasius)[39] as well as negative ('We will not

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[37] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 40.2 (AW II, 205.21–23 Opitz): νομίζων ὡς ὁ χωρισμὸς τοῦ σώματος πάντως καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς διάθεσιν διίστησιν ἢ χωρισθέντες ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν ἐπιλάθωνται τῆς ἀλλήλων ὁμοφροσύνης τε καὶ ὁμοψυχίας. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 284.

[38] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 40.2 (AW II, 205.20–21 Opitz): τοὺς κοινῇ παρρησιασαμένους καὶ ὁμολογήσαντας καὶ διεχώρισε τοὺς συνδεθέντας τῇ πίστει. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 284.

[39] E.g., Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 25.2; 30.2–3.

hold communion with heretics!').[40] Entering into communion thus means to participate in a network of faithful peers, and refusing such communion implies an excommunication, which is based on the decision of the synods which should be reckoned normative. Technically, such boundary-making works from any point of view, and this is why Athanasius as well as his 'Eusebian' and 'Homoian' opponents were eager to draw red lines beyond which there could be no communion.[41] In the same year, 357, with the second Formula of Sirmium (the so-called 'Dated Creed'), the series of formulae of faith started, that eventually resulted in the homoian dogma of Constantinople in 360 (which would receive imperial support until the death of the emperor Valens in 378, nearly two decades later, when Athanasius had already died).[42]

Such boundary-making did not remain confined to Athanasius' doctrinal treatises. If we take a side-glance on the *Life of Antony*, also written during the bishop's third exile, we observe that the hagiographer narrates three times that the hermit did not enter into communion with the enemies of the Church, neither with the 'heretical Arians' nor with the 'schismatic Melitians'.[43] While the 'Arians', whom we have encountered above, had emerged from a theological debate between Arius and bishop Alexander of Alexandria, the 'Melitians' had built an alternative episcopal succession: after bishop Peter had fled during the Diocletian persecution, a group which was led by Melitius of Lycopolis did no longer acknowledge him as true bishop and appropriate shepherd of his flock. Although Peter had been eventually martyred in 311, Melitius and his followers continued to insist on the legitimacy of episcopal elections which had taken place during Peter's hiding and which were, to say the least, debatable on canonical grounds. Moreover, the 'Melitians' accused Athanasius himself of an uncanonical election: they complained that he had not yet reached the canonical age of 30 years when he was made bishop and that he had conspired with a minority of bishops in order to dupe the

[40] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 60.5 (AW II, 217.8 Opitz): οὐ κοινωνοῦμεν δὲ τοῖς αἱρετικοῖς. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 292.

[41] See, e.g., Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 15.1; 28.1; 32.2; 35.5.

[42] For the heated phase of homoian Creed-making between 357 and 360, see Hanson 1988, p. 343–86.

[43] Athanasius, *VA* 68.1–2; 89.4; 91.4.

majority.[44] Perhaps these accusations were not without substance, but the details remain unclear. Be that as it may, Athanasius had to fight against two groups of enemies, as he saw it, and both groups were busy in widening their networks in Egypt and the whole Mediterranean.

For our purpose, it is interesting to observe how, from Athanasius' point of view, both groups of enemies successively merged and formed *one even larger network* which, at the end, comprised anyone who was hostile to himself. Already in the late 330s, Athanasius had complained that the 'Melitians' participated in the 'Arian' conspiracy against him. Certain disciplinary accusations against him had only been brought forth in order to enable the 'Eusebians' to introduce their impiety into the Church![45] In the *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, Athanasius complains that 'Arians' and 'Melitians' formerly

> were at enmity with one another on private grounds, but now have become friends and join hands, in their hostility to the truth and their impiety towards God [...] the Melitians for the sake of pre-eminence and the mad love of money, and the Arian madmen for their own impiety.[46]

The accusation of striving for προστασία, which here is attributed to the 'Melitians', is the same like we have seen above with regard to Eusebius of Nicomedia. In the *History of the Arians*, Athanasius reiterates this cause and adds further polemical flavour: 'Melitians' do not want to contribute to the city's welfare but claim *exemption from duty* (ἀλειτουργησία), thus they are unreliable citizens; they want to become bishops without having been catechumens, thus they lack appropriate theological education; and because they refused to receive any Christian instruction, they do not tell *piety*

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[44] For this, see Gwynn 2012, p. 25–26 and Gemeinhardt 2014, p. 369–71 (with further references).

[45] See Athanasius, *apol. sec.* 85.1 (AW II, 163.15–16 Opitz); cf. Gwynn 2012, p. 27.

[46] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 22.1 (AW I.1.1, 62.2–63.7 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ μισήσειεν ἄν τις αὐτοὺς δικαίως, ὅτι τῶν μὲν ἰδίων χάριν ἀπηχθάνοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους, εἰς δὲ τὴν κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἔχθραν καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἀσέβειαν φίλοι γεγόνασι καὶ ἀλλήλους δεξιοῦνται πάντα τε παρὰ γνώμην πάσχειν ὑπομένουσι διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ἑκάστου τῆς προθέσεως ἡδονήν· Μελιτιανοὶ μὲν διὰ τὴν προστασίαν καὶ μανίαν τῆς φιλαργυρίας, Ἀρειομανῖται δὲ διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ἀσέβειαν. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 234.

(εὐσέβεια) from *impiety* (ἀσέβεια) and end up, unsurprisingly, as heretics: 'From being Melitians they readily and speedily became Arians'![47] In this way, while Athanasius formed his own network out of all bishops who had communion with him or, at least, were sent to exile by the emperor Constantius without bothering himself too much with their theological positions (he did not yet straight-forwardly employ the Nicene *homousios* as hallmark of ortho-doxy), at the same time, he deliberately constructed a contrasting network out of all his enemies—pagans, 'Arians', 'Melitians', and the emperor himself. Again, we should not occupy ourselves with the question whether the 'Melitians' really were characterised by enormous avarice, as is suggested by Athanasius; it suffices that he ascribes both parties *madness* (μανία)—madness for money and for Arius' teachings respectively—to illustrate that this is anything else than an impartial account. What unites the God-loving Nicene bishops is faith; what unites 'Melitians' and 'Arians' is madness!

Let's sum up for the moment: the notion of networks might be helpful to sort out what Athanasius does by employing categories like 'Arian' and 'Melitian' as opposed to 'Christian' and 'faithful'. Speaking of networks provides a common base for these ascrip-tions, while they certainly cannot be neutralised: they are polemi-cal insofar as Athanasius draws boundaries between the correct and the erroneous faith and the respective modes of behaviour. Adherence to the right faith constitutes communion, and such κοινωνία is the means by which a network is stabilised. Allowing or refusing people to enter this κοινωνία is thus a crucial way to administer such networks.

3. *False Friends. Polemics, Rivalry and the Teaching of the Fathers*

In the rest of this paper, I want to specify my preliminary find-ings in two directions: horizontally and vertically, in other words: regarding the networks of the living and the communion beyond space and time. Obviously, this second meaning of 'network' is

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[47] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 78.1–2 (AW II, 226.25–227.1 Opitz; quotation: 227.1): Προθύμως γοῦν καὶ ταχέως ἐκ Μελιτιανῶν Ἀρειανοὶ γενόνασιν. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 300.

metaphorical, while the first one has immediate political, ecclesiastical and theological implications. As we shall see, however, such a strict distinction does not sufficiently mirror the observation that also a metaphor has the potential to describe and shape reality: by unravelling a deeper understanding of relationships between God and the human beings, it might also empower individual and institutional agency, as far as conceptual legitimisation is needed. In what follows, we will thus have a look at constellations of faith, discipline, and power within history and then, in the next section, ask for networks, that transcend the realm of concrete human interaction.

Until now, I have mentioned from time to time the 'Nicene faith', but it might have remained unclear what precisely this means. The participants in the debates between 350 and 357 will have had a similar impression. Only over the course of this decade, 'Nicaea' successively gained prominence in theological debates, the synod as well as the Creed. In the previous time between 325 and 350, nearly no one had laid claim to Nicaea, due to the lack of clarity about the implications of the theological definitions and demarcations of the Creed. Only a few years after the synod, Arius had been reconciled to the communion of the Church on demand of the emperor Constantine (because of which many bishops believed that the case was settled once and for all). If there was a network of 'the Eusebians', in the 330s, it was the mainstream option of Eastern theology: to follow up Origen's way of speaking of three hypostases (but not of the eternal generation of the Son) in order to preserve the one Unbegotten. By implication, the Son is generated not, as the Nicene Creed had claimed, 'from the Father's substance (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός)' but 'from the inexpressible and incomprehensible will and power of the Father (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀνεκφράστου καὶ ἀπερινοήτου βουλῆς τε καὶ δυνάμεως)'.[48] This was meant to secure the distinction between God as the only cause of everything begotten or created and the Logos, who had not been created but begotten; thus, the fundamental principle of 'mono-theism' was at stake, and this was apparently a concern of many bishops of theologians who were no 'Arians' but were

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[48] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Euangelica* 4.3.13 (GCS Eusebius 6, 154.18, 20–21 Heikel). Trans. Ayres 2004, p. 58.

sceptical of the Nicene doctrine. To cut a long story short,[49] until the 350s, 'Nicaea' was widely reckoned not the solution but a part of the problem.

For our present purpose, it is all the more interesting to examine the use of the reference to Nicaea in Athanasius' polemical writings from his third exile, insofar as this reveals the answer to a pressing question: if one's own network is designed to be the 'orthodox' one (as opposed to—constructed or existing—'heretical' networks), how can one define orthodoxy? And if the past decades have witnessed the production of multiple Creeds and credal statements, how can one make one of them plausible as the only point of reference?[50] While his theological, political, and individual situation was getting worse, Athanasius came to the conclusion that none of the many credal formulae which had been created by individuals and synods in the 340s and early 350s could serve as a marker of identity for the 'orthodox' party but only the Creed of Nicaea which, after all, was the solemn utterance of a council which had united bishops from all regions of the Empire (or had at least understood itself to represent the 'ecumenical' church). Therefore, the depiction of a hostile 'Arian' or 'Eusebian' network was supplemented by the Nicene synod as opposite of the many regional synods since then. In *On the Decrees of the Synod of Nicaea*, written in 357 or 358,[51] he states: 'He who does not hold the doctrines of Arius necessarily holds and intends the doctrines of the (Nicene) synod'.[52] This contradiction was under construction in Athanasius' treatises of these years of exile and crisis. In his *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, Athanasius mocks his opponents:

> For had they believed aright, they would have been satisfied
> with the confession put forth at Nicaea by the whole Ecu-

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[49] The story of this 'period of confusion' has been masterly told by Hanson 1988, p. 181–413.

[50] Greek Creeds and credal formulae from Arius to the synod of Constantinople (381) are now conveniently accessible in Kinzig 2017, I, p. 269–552 (§§ 131–84).

[51] The date of this treatise is disputed. I follow the suggestion of Heil 2011, p. 211 that *De decretis* is a reaction to the synod of Sirmium in 357.

[52] Athanasius, *decr.* 20.6 (AW II, 17.26–27 Opitz): ὁ δὲ τὰ Ἀρείου μὴ φρονῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ τῆς συνόδου φρονεῖ. Trans. Gwynn 2007, p. 169. For the development of this 'rhetoric of polarisation', see Gwynn 2007, p. 171–77.

menic Council [...] This, however, is not the course they pur-
sue, but they conduct the struggle in their own behalf, just as
if they were Arius. Observe how entirely they disregard the
truth, and how everything they say and do is for the sake of
the Arian heresy.[53]

A moment later he adds that the 'Arians' receive every bishop
who has been deposed because of his heretical opinions, among
them Ursacius and Valens who 'from the first had been instructed
by Arius as young men'[54] and, for this reason, were denied their
priesthood, but also many others who 'were degraded in the great
synod of Serdica'.[55] They even desire that 'the supremacy of their
own meetings, held in corners and suspicious in their circum-
stances, would forcibly cancel the decrees of an uncorrupt, pure,
and Ecumenic synod'.[56] Athanasius exhorts his fellow bishops to
resist this demand:

> Hold fast, everyone, the faith we have received from the
> Fathers, which they who assembled at Nicaea recorded in
> writing, and endure not those who endeavour to innovate
> thereon![57]

What Athanasius defines as hallmark of orthodoxy is however
not only the synod itself. According to his growing awareness of

[53] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 5.4–5 (AW I.1.1, 44.16–17; 45.20–22 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): εἰ γὰρ ἐπίστευον ὀρθῶς, ἠρκοῦντο τῇ ἐν Νικαίᾳ ἐκτεθείσῃ πίστει παρὰ πάσης τῆς οἰκουμενικῆς συνόδου [...] νῦν δὲ τοῦτο μὲν οὐ ποιοῦσιν, ὡς δὲ αὐτοὶ ὄντες Ἄρειος ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀγωνίζονται. σκοπεῖτε γὰρ ὡς οὐκ ἀληθείας μέλει τούτοις, ἀλλὰ πάντα διὰ τὴν Ἀρειανὴν αἵρεσιν καὶ λέγουσι καὶ πράττουσιν. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 225.

[54] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 7.4 (AW I.1.1, 46.15 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): οἳ καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ὡς νεώτεροι παρὰ Ἀρείου κατηχήθησαν. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 226.

[55] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 7.4 (AW I.1.1, 46.16–47.17 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): οὗτοι μὲν οὖν καὶ ἐν τῇ κατὰ Σαρδικὴν γενομένῃ μεγάλῃ συνόδῳ καθῃρέθησαν. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 225.

[56] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 7.2 (AW I.1.1, 46.3–6 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): ὀλίγοι γὰρ ὄντες τὸν ἀριθμὸν θέλουσι τὰ ἑαυτῶν ὑπὲρ τὰ πάντα ἰσχύειν τά τε ἑαυτῶν συγκροτήματα ἐν γωνίαις γινόμενα καὶ ὕποπτα τυγχάνοντα βουλόμενοι κρατεῖν βιάζονται λύειν καὶ ἀκυροῦν τὴν οἰκουμενικὴν γενομένην ἄδολον καὶ καθαρὰν σύνοδον. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 226.

[57] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 8.1 (AW I.1.1, 47.5–7 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): καὶ κατέχων ἕκαστος τὴν ἐκ πατέρων πίστιν, ἣν καὶ οἱ ἐν Νικαίᾳ συνελθόντες ὑπέμνησαν γράψαντες, μὴ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν κατ' αὐτῆς καινοτομεῖν ἐπιχειρούντων. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 227.

the need of a written statement of faith, he refers expressly to the Nicene Creed, as becomes clear from a passage at the end of the letter:

> Wherefore I exhort you, keeping in your hands the faith which was written down by the Fathers at Nicaea, and defending it with great zeal and confidence in the Lord, be examples to the brethren everywhere, and show them that a struggle is now before us in support of the truth against heresy, and that the wiles of the enemy are various.[58]

What do we learn from these passages about the construction of networks? First, certain synods function as marker of identity: the synod of Nicaea in 325 and the synod of Serdica in 343—Athanasius, of course, speaks of the Western part of this divided congregation.[59] Second, the synod of Nicaea is especially qualified as 'ecumenic, uncorrupt, and pure' in contrast to the small and secret meetings of the 'Arians' in shadowy corners. Contrary to the political state of affairs, Athanasius insists that the synod of Nicaea, convoked and directed by Constantius' father Constantine, is the source of orthodox teaching on the Trinity which all bishops and the emperor should accept, and the synod of Serdica figures as 'the holy synod'[60] which is instrumental in interpreting the confession of Nicaea. Third—and here the notion of networks comes in—these synods are composed of 'the Fathers': they are not to be regarded an accidental assembly or more or less cunning theologians but as a congregation of those who are really inspired by the Holy Spirit and led by venerable men, like Ossius of Cordoba who is named 'the father' of the western participants in Serdica. In contrast, the eastern

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[58] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 21.1 (AW I.1.1, 61.1–62.4 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): Διὰ τοῦτο, παρακαλῶ, ἔχοντες μετὰ χεῖρας τὴν ἐν Νικαίᾳ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων γραφεῖσαν πίστιν καὶ ταύτην ἐκδικοῦντες πολλῇ τῇ προθυμίᾳ καὶ τῇ εἰς τὸν κύριον πεποιθήσει τύπος γένεσθε τοῖς πανταχοῦ δεικνύντες ἀγῶνα προκεῖσθαι νῦν πρὸς τὴν αἵρεσιν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ποικίλας εἶναι τοῦ ἐχθροῦ τὰς μεθοδείας. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 234 (modified).

[59] A few years later, he would however deny the role of Serdica as follow-up of Nicaea and defame the Serdican Creed as mere 'scrap of paper' (πιττάκιον); see Athanasius, *tom. Ant.* 5.1 (AW II, 344.1 = AW III.1.4, 596.26 Brennecke et al.).

[60] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 16.3; 17.1 (AW II, 191.16, 23 Opitz).

bishops are accompanied by state officials as 'pedagogues and advocates', as Athanasius ironically remarks, that is, they need people who take them to the meeting place (like the pedagogue took small children to school) and counsel them during the negotiations of the synod (while bishops, as Athanasius insinuates, should know themselves when and what to say).[61] Later in the *History of the Arians*, Ossius is named *father of the bishops* (πατὴρ τῶν ἐπισκόπων) and *confessor* (ὁμολογητής);[62] we will soon come back to the latter title. These fathers as individuals and as plenary assembly of the synods incorporate and thereby warrant the proper distinction between 'the Arian heresy' and 'the Church of God'.[63] In doing so, they are supported even by apostolic authority, that is, by the bishops of Rome: bishop Julius himself had defended Athanasius' cause at a Roman synod (341).[64] His successor Liberius,[65] in a statement to the emperor, underlines that he had received Athanasius into communion and that his cause should be treated on a purely ecclesiastical synod, without any interference by the emperor, 'as the Fathers defined it in the synod of Nicaea' and 'as we have received it from the Fathers'.[66] In tune with this apostolic claim, Athanasius himself asks rhetorically: 'If a judgment had been passed by bishops, what concern had the emperor with it'?[67]

It goes without saying that Athanasius had no objections against imperial intervention, as long as it supported his own cause, and in the same *History of the Arians*, he seizes the opportunity to stress how emperor Constantius did everything to further the bishop's return to Alexandria in 346 after the death

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[61] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 15.3 (AW II, 190.14–16 Opitz): καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς δύσεως μόνοι ἦσαν ἐπίσκοποι ἔχοντες πατέρα τὸν Ὅσιον, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνατολῆς ἐπήγοντο μεθ' ἑαυτῶν παιδαγωγοὺς καὶ συνηγόρους Μουσουνιανὸν κόμητα καὶ Ἡσύχιον τὸν καστρήσιον.

[62] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 42.1 (AW II, 206.21–22 Opitz). See Flower 2013, p. 155.

[63] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 34.1 (AW II, 202.10 Opitz).

[64] See, e.g., Hanson 1988, p. 270–73.

[65] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 35.2 (AW II, 202.29–31 Opitz).

[66] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 36.1, 2, 5 (AW II, 203.12–13.20–21.29 Opitz).

[67] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 52.3 (AW II, 213.5–6 Opitz): εἰ γὰρ ἐπισκόπων ἐστὶ κρίσις, τί κοινὸν ἔχει πρὸς ταύτην βασιλεύς; Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 289.

of the counter-bishop Gregory.[68] A decade later, the wind had changed, and Athanasius had to face a stern opposition between (in later terminology) 'church and state'. Therefore it was necessary to establish ideological and practical ties without relying on the emperor and his local agents. His solution would be of great impact on the future definition of ecclesiastical identity and theological orthodoxy insofar as 'the Fathers' as argument made their appearance. Athanasius' network extends from the synod of Nicaea and its orthodox protagonists to the fathers of the recent synod of Serdica and the bishop of the old capital of the Roman Empire—while the 'Arians' cannot lay claim to any authoritative synods or true fathers, not to speak of apostolic tradition.[69] Now, it is the task of the present bishops to function as *examples* or *role models* (τύποι) by displaying unwavering adherence to the Nicene faith and thereby following up the footsteps of the normative fathers.

4. *The Heavenly Network. Martyrs, Saints and Confessors*

But who are these 'Fathers'? In the *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, Athanasius provides an extensive list of bishops who are loyal to Nicaea. Timothy Barnes writes upon this: 'The long list, designed to impress the country bishops of Egypt and Libya, reveals Athanasius' isolation: too many of his champions were dead when he wrote [...]'.[70] Following up an observation of Thomas Graumann,[71] and in contrast to Barnes' view, I would argue that Athanasius chooses his authorities deliberately, not simply in want of alternatives. For even if a bishop was dead, he had not automatically lost any importance for the living. Athanasius states that none other than the devil, 'who was silenced by our

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[68] See Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 21.1–3 (AW II, 194.1–13 Opitz); Barnes 1993, p. 132.

[69] The recourse to normative 'Fathers' would be elaborated in Athanasius' writings around 360, esp. *De synodis*, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* and *De sententia Dionysii*. For this, see Graumann 2002, p. 119–71.

[70] Barnes 1993, p. 123.

[71] Graumann 2002, p. 171–73.

Saviour',[72] now tries to deceive the innocent by way of the erroneous teachings of the 'Arians':

> The wicked one artfully dissembles in his speech, and oftentimes the malevolent endeavours to lead men astray by the subtleties and sophistries of the Gentiles.[73]

In passing, but nonetheless quite pronounced, it becomes clear that the devil's art is based upon *fine speaking* (κομψολογία) and *sophistic arguments* (σοφίσματα) which are qualified as 'Hellenic', and this means in the given context: opposed to 'Christian'.[74] Therefore, the 'Arians' form a learned network, but their learning is informed by misleading principles. In order to be protected against such a deception, one should care in the first place not for the words but for their speakers, and this is where the list of bishops comes in:

> Had these expositions of theirs proceeded from the orthodox, from such as the great confessor Ossius [...], there would then have been nothing to suspect in their statements, for the character of apostolic men is incapable of fraud and simple.[75]

The suspension points actually hide a list of 27 names in the Greek text, including Julius and Liberius of Rome, and Athanasius' predecessor Alexander. While the individuals need not to be discussed in detail here, the important point is that Athanasius here produces a 'cloud of witnesses', consisting of living and deceased bishops, who are united by their 'apostolic' teaching which is qualified as ἄδολος and ἁπλοῦς, 'incapable of fraud' and 'simple', that

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[72] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 8.3 (AW I.1.1, 48.12 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): ἐφιμώθη δὲ παρὰ τοῦ σωτῆρος.

[73] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 8.3 (AW I.1.1, 48.13–15 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): νῦν δὲ τῷ φρονήματι πεσὼν ὑποκρίνεται τοῖς ῥήμασιν ὁ πανοῦργος· πολλάκις δὲ καὶ ἐξ Ἑλληνικῆς κομψολογίας καὶ τοῖς ταύτης σοφίσμασι πειράζει πλανᾶν ὁ κακοθελής. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 227 (modified).

[74] For polemics against κομψολογία see also Athanasius, *Ar.* 3.59.2 (AW I.1.3, 371.12–372.14 Savvidis).

[75] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 8.4 (AW I.1.1, 48.15–16; 49.28–29 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): εἰ μὲν οὖν παρὰ ὀρθοδόξων ἦν τὰ γραφόμενα, οἷα ἐγεγόνει παρὰ τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ὁμολογητοῦ Ὁσίου [...] οὐδὲν ἦν ἐν τοῖς γραφομένοις ὑποπτεύειν ἄδολος γὰρ καὶ ἁπλοῦς ὁ τῶν ἀποστολικῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐστι τρόπος. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 227 (modified).

is, they are not in need of 'the subtleties and sophistries of the Gentiles' which were mentioned before. Truly apostolic bishops thus resemble Peter and John standing before the High Council in Jerusalem who were admired for their speech, since they were 'uneducated and ordinary men' (ἀγράμματοι καὶ ἰδιῶται, Act. 4.13), that is, not educated in Hellenic παιδεία.

In the midst of a debate which had become extremely difficult to survey with regard to theological opinions and synodal decisions, Athanasius substantially enlarges the assembly of orthodox and apostolic Fathers as an argument against the 'Arians'. One could also say: he knits an even tighter but also more extensive network of witnesses to the true faith, not only (as we have seen) by referring to synodal authority but also to persons of unfailing orthodoxy: confessors and martyrs. Let me just notice that, according to Christian opinion since the second century, a martyr had been defined as having given witness to the faith by his (or her) death; if, however, a person had been sentenced to death but, through no fault of his or her own, escaped execution, he or she had been reckoned as a confessor and credited with a special kind of spiritual authority. Witnessing to the faith by shedding one's blood was, after the persecutions had ceased, no longer an option, but the ideal of martyrdom was continuously held in high esteem. Athanasius was eager to transform this ideal according to the needs of his present time: in his *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, he refers to the venerated martyrdom by death but then adds that 'to refuse to deny the faith is also an illustrious martyrdom *of conscience*'.[76] Thereby, he parallels himself implicitly with another 'martyr' of this kind, Antony the hermit, who during the Diocletian persecution went to Alexandria in order to assist the accused Christians on their way to their execution and finally acquire the crown of martyrdom for himself. To his disappointment, God himself denied him this honorific death in order

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[76] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 21.2 (AW I.1.1, 62.4–6 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): οὐ γὰρ μόνον τὸ μὴ θῦσαι λίβανον δείκνυσι μάρτυρας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ μὴ ἀρνήσασθαι τὴν πίστιν ποιεῖ τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως λαμπρόν (my italics). For Athanasius' self-fashioning as martyr, see Flower 2013, p. 152; Gemeinhardt 2014, p. 350–51; and Heil 2018, p. 188–92.

to appoint him 'a teacher for many';[77] henceforth, he imitated Christ as a 'martyr in conscience' (μαρτυρῶν τῇ συνειδήσει) instead of 'spreading his blood as a witness' (μεμαρτύρηκεν, as attested for the Alexandrian bishop Peter) but by teaching the ascetic way of life.[78] Athanasius, who did not equal is predecessor as martyr in the traditional sense, nonetheless views himself as victim of persecution and steadfast confessor of the faith and thus feels like a living martyr—hence the prominence of martyrological topic in the *Life of Antony*, written exactly in these years.[79]

This discourse on martyrdom is also characteristic of other Athanasian writings of this time besides the *Life of Antony*.[80] E.g., in the *Festal Letter* of that very year 357 when he wrote both texts which are mainly under discussion here, Athanasius refers to the many trials of the biblical patriarchs and concludes: 'Let us too endure like this, so that we might share in their sufferings'.[81] David Brakke comments upon this admonition:

> In the *Festal Letter* for 357, Athanasius told his followers that continued adherence to him despite imperial persecution was imitation of the Old Testament saints, all of whom had suffered 'afflictions, trials, and persecutions': Fellowship with Athanasius was fellowship with these Old Testament saints [...]. But echoing the old-fashioned rhetoric of martyrdom literature, Athanasius used this theme of imitation of the saints to rally Christians to his side in his conflict with the imperial authorities and to reclaim from the Melitians the title of martyr Church.[82]

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[77] Athanasius, *VA* 46.6 (FC 69, 214.14–216.2 Gemeinhardt): Ηὔχετο γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς μαρτυρῆσαι, καθὰ προεῖπον. Αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν λυπουμένῳ ἐῴκει, ὅτι μὴ μεμαρτύρηκεν· ὁ δὲ Κύριος ἦν αὐτὸν φυλάττων εἰς τὴν ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ἑτέρων ὠφέλειαν, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀσκήσει, ἣν αὐτὸς ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν μεμάθηκεν, πολλοῖς διδάσκαλος γένηται.

[78] Athanasius, *VA* 47.1 (FC 69, 218.1–4 Gemeinhardt): Ἐπειδὴ δὲ λοιπὸν ὁ διωγμὸς ἐπαύσατο, καὶ μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ μακαρίτης ἐπίσκοπος Πέτρος, ἀπεδήμησε, καὶ πάλιν εἰς τὸ μοναστήριον ἀνεχώρει, καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ καθ' ἡμέραν μαρτυρῶν τῇ συνειδήσει καὶ ἀγωνιζόμενος τοῖς τῆς πίστεως ἄθλοις.

[79] Cf. Gemeinhardt 2014, p. 338–44.

[80] See Gemeinhardt 2014, p. 350–53, and already Leemans 2003.

[81] Athanasius, *Ep. fest.* (copt.) 29 (CSCO 150, 53.18–19 Lefort). Trans. Brakke 1995, p. 324.

[82] Brakke 1995, p. 166. For the *Festal Letters* as part of Athanasius' networking campaigns, see Gwynn 2019.

Not only in his *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, has Athanasius appealed to the bishops of Egypt and Libya to join the network of such witnesses. Also in the *History of the Arians*, we encounter the bishop and confessor Potamon who was tortured and finally brought to death in the time of the counter-bishop Gregory of Alexandria (339–45),[83] the subdeacon Eutychius 'who perished rejoicing, having obtained the glory of martyrdom',[84] and other unnamed martyrs whose piety was even acknowledged by pagans![85] Quoting from the book of Daniel, Athanasius states that the emperor Constantius is none other than the Antichrist: 'He speaks words against the Most High by supporting this impious heresy; he makes war against the saints by banishing the bishops'.[86] Compared to his usual terminology, it is indicative that Athanasius refers to living bishops as 'saints' (ἅγιοι): otherwise, he reserves this notion for the biblical saints, e.g., the patriarchs from the book of Genesis. In the *Life of Antony*, he does not even call the famous hermit ἅγιος, but μακάριος (and only in selected passages). In contrast, he mentions occasionally the 'holy martyrs' of the Diocletian persecution.[87] Significantly, in the *History of the Arians* when Athanasius narrates the proceedings of the synod of Milan (355), he speaks of several 'confessors' (ὁμολογηταί) because these witnesses to his cause were still living: Paulinus of Treveri, Lucifer of Cagliari, Eusebius of Vercelli, and Dionysius of Milan, all of whom were exiled because of their unfailing support for Athanasius.[88] But a few lines below, he terms them 'holy men' (οἱ ἅγιοι), and at the end of his narration, he concludes with an

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[83] Athanasius, *h. Ar*. 12.2 (AW II, 189.9–12 Opitz).

[84] Athanasius, *h. Ar*. 60.3 (AW II, 216.30–31 Opitz): ὁ μὲν ἐτελεύτα χαίρων ἔχων τὸ καύχημα τοῦ μαρτυρίου. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 292.

[85] Athanasius, *h. Ar*. 62.2 (AW II, 217.35–218.3 Opitz).

[86] Athanasius, *h. Ar*. 74.3 (AW II, 224.13–14 Opitz): λαλεῖ γὰρ λόγους πρὸς τὸν ὕψιστον προιστάμενος τῆς ἀσεβοῦς αἱρέσεως καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ποιεῖ πόλεμον ἐξορίζων τοὺς ἐπισκόπους. The quotation which precedes this passage is from Dan. 7.21, 24–25. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 298.

[87] Athanasius, *VA* 46.1 (FC 69, 212.9 Gemeinhardt); cf. also the reference Athanasius, *VA* 90.5 (ibid. 300.18) to unnamed saints whose corpses are put in the bier in private houses (a practice of which Antony or Athanasius respectively is critical).

[88] Athanasius, *h. Ar*. 33.6 (AW II, 201.28–34 Opitz).

eschatological promise to them and all followers who resist the networks of 'Melitians' and 'Ariomanites':

> For them who endure tribulations here, as sailors reach a quiet haven after a storm, like athletes receive a crown after the combat, so these shall obtain great and eternal joy and delight in heaven.[89]

Therefore, Athanasius' own network includes the inhabitants of the kingdom of God. Christians, since Tertullian, envisioned the deceased martyrs in the heavenly realm, rejoicing in the company of angels. But this implies also a judgment about the heretics: In his *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, Athanasius describes the cruel death of Arius while visiting a public latrine and adds that 'he was forthwith deprived of communion with the Church and of his life together'.[90] And this turned out to be true not only for Arius himself but for the representatives of his heresy in general: 'It was shown (sc. by his death) that the "Arian madness" was rejected from communion by our Saviour both here and in the church of the first-born in heaven'.[91] As it seems, the rivalry between Athanasius and the 'Arians' will endure till the final judgment. From a modern ecumenical point of view, one might hope that there will be no more polemics in heaven. But in the fourth century, these competing networks would have never been knit together again as long as people consciously decided to stay on the wrong side. Of course, Athanasius aimed at people siding with him and thus changing their affiliations. He advertised this change by pointing out the eschatological hope of being received in heaven. Joining the right network on earth would gain its participants a joyful company in eternity. At least in his own view,

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[89] Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 79.4 (AW II, 227.39–228.1 Opitz): τοῖς δὲ ὑπομείνασι τὰς ὧδε θλίψεις, ὡς ἐκ χειμῶνος ναύταις εὔδιος λιμήν, ὡς ἀθληταῖς μετὰ τὸν ἀγῶνα στέφανος, οὕτω καὶ αὐτοῖς μεγάλη καὶ αἰώνιος χαρὰ καὶ εὐφροσύνη ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς γενήσεται. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 300.

[90] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 19.3 (AW I.1.1, 59.10 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): καὶ ἀμφοτέρων τῆς τε κοινωνίας καὶ τοῦ ζῆν εὐθὺς ἐστερήθη. Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 233.

[91] Athanasius, *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 19.4 (AW I.1.1, 60.13–15 Metzler, Hansen & Savvidis): ἐδείχθη δὲ πάλιν, ὅτι παρὰ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἀκοινώνητος γέγονεν ἡ Ἀρειανὴ μανία καὶ ὧδε καὶ ἐν 'τῇ τῶν πρωτοτόκων ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἐκκλησίᾳ' (cf. Hebr. 12.23). Trans. Robertson 1987, p. 233.

Athanasius thus excelled as networker with living men but also with saints.

5. *Conclusion. The Usefulness and Limits of Speaking of Networks*

Athanasius has always been known as one of the great polemicists of late antique Christianity. Polemics, however, does not only reveal one's view of others but also one's self-perception. Richard Flower, in his book on late antique practices of invective, points out that

> within the educated elite of the Roman empire and its culture of epideictic display, invective was a powerful medium for self-construction. Not only did it provide the author with an opportunity to display his rhetorical skill and literary knowledge, but it also allowed him to create an image of himself as a brave opponent of vice and tyranny.[92]

In order to do so, it was not only helpful but even mandatory to employ methods and patterns of rhetoric as it was taught in the ancient schools. People who had received the same instruction would be able to decode such polemics and the self-construction of the polemicist. This is also true for Christian theologians who, however, in many cases did not refer openly to the canon of classical παιδεία for the purpose of polemicising. As we have seen in Athanasius' writings, and as could be demonstrated in other cases,[93] they repeatedly used biblical texts to depict their opponents, most prominently the emperors, as servants of the devil[94] or, equally wrong, as disciples of Plato or Aristotle instead of Jesus Christ, as far as theologians are the target of polemics. Jerome, e.g., defamed 'Arianism' as 'borrowing the streams of its argument

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[92] Flower 2013, p. 134.

[93] Flower scrutinises texts of Athanasius as well as of Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari. Another case in point would be, e.g., the literary controversy between Jerome and Rufinus of Aquileia.

[94] Thus Flower 2013, p. 108–09 with reference to the comparison between Constantius and Pontius Pilate (who, after all, appears less malicious than the emperor) in Athanasius, *h. Ar.* 68.3 (AW II, 220.29–31 Opitz).

from the springs of Aristotle';[95] Marcellus of Ancyra had criticised Origen for applying the notion of ὑπόστασις to the Logos and added that this was unavoidable if one had taken in too much of the 'education from the outside' (ἡ ἔξωθεν παίδευσις) which he saw primarily represented by Plato.[96] Education thus helped to draw boundaries of the true faith: theologians referred to biblical authorities while criticising the 'philosophical' argumentation of their opponents; but in doing so, they made use of rhetorical competencies which were essential to make their cause plausible and to attract new allies. In this way, polemics against wrong kinds of learning served to establish and stabilise learned networks of orthodoxy.

Boundaries and loyalties which were construed in this way were however always open to reconfiguration. In the aftermath of the synod of Nicaea, the debate over the doctrine of Christ was increasingly conducted in a personalised manner: Marcellus of Ancyra and Athanasius, e.g., became the addressees of sharp literary invective by Eusebius of Caesarea; in turn, Athanasius invented 'the Eusebians' and declared them collectively the true heirs of Arius, in open disregard of the fact that Arius did no longer play any active role in the ongoing debate and that none of Athanasius' opponents defined himself as being loyal to Arius. In his writings, as is well known, Athanasius created 'Arianism'.[97] Moreover, he evoked a lasting impression of rivalries between clear-cut 'parties' with neatly defined theological options, and he never forgot to garnish his argument with deliberate polemics against 'the avarice of the Melitians' and 'the impiety of the Ariomanites' and so on.

This polemical construction of the self and the other (which was of course not only the aim of Athanasius) might be seen as creating networks of orthodoxy and heresy. Modern research has

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[95] Jerome, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* 11 (CCSL 79B, 32.430–31 Canellis): *argumentationum riuos de Aristotelis fontibus mutuatur*. Trans. Hanson 1988, p. 85.

[96] Marcellus of Ancyra, frg. 22 (SVigChr 39, 22.7–19 Vinzent) = frg. 88 (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Contra Marcellum* 1.4.24; GCS Eusebius IV, 22.29–23.6 Klostermann & Hansen). Cf. Logan 1999, p. 161.

[97] For this highly influential image in the course of history see Brennecke 2014.

pointed out that, historically speaking, there was by no means a dual alternative but a variety of orthodoxies.[98] Correspondingly, we should not be surprised to find multiple networks of orthodoxy, fluid in themselves, and more or less effective in organising support for a given theological position, as is visible by the rapidly changing alliances between what has been called 'Homoians', 'Homoiusians' and 'Homousians' in the late 350s. In the course of time, the pro-Nicene option would gain concrete shape, and from the mid-360s onwards, a new generation of theologians like Basil of Caesarea would take the lead, not without renewed lines of conflict within this 'neo-Nicene' network, e.g., concerning the latter's debate with Eustathius of Sebaste concerning the Holy Spirit.[99]

This does not need to bother us here any further. For our present purpose, it is more interesting how—in general—such networks were constructed. There are, of course, many different phenomena to consider, but we can identify some common traits of any learned network in the trinitarian debate. They may be summarised like this:

– A network centred around a specific mixture of doctrinal positions and personal loyalties which could be strengthened and weakened by ideological and political circumstances;

– it was constituted by an opposition between orthodox believers and heretics including their political allies (in the latter case, actually being the agents of the devil);

– it was marked by reference to normative synods and fathers, be it Nicaea or, between 360 and 380, the synod of Constantinople in 360;

– it extended possibly throughout the Roman empire, notwithstanding exile and loss of power which many bishops had to endure;

– finally, it connected the suffering believers on earth and the glorified (and orthodox!) saints in heaven.

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[98] This is argued with respect to Athanasius' *Tomus ad Antiochenos* of 362 in Gemeinhardt 2006.

[99] Ayres 2004, p. 225 refers to this debate as another example of 'the complex intertwining of the personal and the theological'.

In my view, such a notion of networks might turn out very useful for investigating the dynamics of the trinitarian debates during the fourth century, including the changing perceptions of what was reckoned 'orthodox' by whom and on which grounds. It would be illuminating to approach other theologians than Athanasius in the same respect, as far as the extant sources allow such an investigation.[100] However, the Alexandrian bishop has not by chance served as a starting point for my study. Asking for his personal, institutional, political and theological networks might contribute to explaining his unexpected success, in spite of all the tribulations of his episcopal career. That Athanasius returned from every exile is due to many factors. But his polemical construction of an orthodox network remained highly plausible for generations of Christian believers to come. For his contemporaries, it would have played a decisive role that his network included the deceased confessors and martyrs. Whether Athanasius himself would have ended up within this heavenly network or much rather in hell (where some protagonists of German *Dogmengeschichte* would have placed him), is however not a question which the historian is entitled to answer.

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[100] In fact, all writers of 'Church Histories' in the late fourth and fifth century rely on Athanasius' writings as sources for their narrative and (with the exception of Philostorgius) acknowledge him as true pillar of orthodoxy throughout the trinitarian debate (see Gemeinhardt 2011b, p. 372–74).

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Abstract

The present paper investigates the construction of networks within fourth-century trinitarian debates. It focusses especially two writings from the exile of Athanasius of Alexandria in the Egyptian desert: the *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* and the *History of the Arians*. Both texts reflect how Athanasius aimed at securing his own position in the midst of the doctrinal struggles of this time by establishing networks with other bishops, on the one hand, and with the deceased saints in heaven, on the other. Thus, the notion of 'networks' taken from recent social research is not only used to analyse the actual building of relationships and alliances but also to highlight the theological and eschatological dimension of the ongoing debates. While Athanasius became famous (and notorious) for his polemics against anyone whom he reckoned 'Arian', the constructive side of his writings from exile should receive attention insofar as they place their author at the point of intersection of earthly and heavenly networks of orthodoxy. Observing those carefully crafted rhetorical constructions leads to a deepened insight into Athanasius' remarkable capability as a writer, polemicist, and theologian.

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